

He's Back in Town
by Philip Buckland



A Frank Hurley Mystery

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CHAPTER I

It was Saturday morning here in Bellingham, Washington, and I was here at home sipping coffee and watching TV and looking forward to not working this weekend. I had been working all week. Now I had the opportunity to do whatever I wanted this weekend and the time after that until I worked again. Although I didn't know when I was going to work again and for how long. I could work again anytime.

I was also deciding what to do today. Then I stopped suddenly and looked at the TV when I heard the anchorman say that yesterday, Peter Gorman, bail bonds man here in Bellingham, died. And there was a picture of Pete next to the anchorman. He had a pale, coarse face. The TV anchorman then said that someone had gone to Pete's

office to see him about something, and then he noticed Pete's body and called the police. Pete had been killed inside his office on Northwest Avenue. He had been shot once through the heart. There were no signs of a struggle inside Pete's office, which meant that the killer must have been a few feet away from Pete when he had killed Pete. And no one had heard the shot, which meant that the shot must have been silenced in some way. And it looked like no one had seen the killer kill Pete, which meant that the killer had managed not to be seen by anyone when he had killed Pete. And it looked like the only thing that had been stolen from Pete's office was his briefcase. And it didn't look like anything else had happened inside Pete's office. Which meant that the only two things that had happened inside Pete's office were someone killing Pete and stealing his briefcase. And the only fingerprints that were inside Pete's office were Pete's fingerprints. There were no other

fingerprints. Which meant that the person who had killed Pete and stolen his briefcase must have worn gloves.

Then the anchorman said that Pete had lived here in Bellingham for several years and had been in the bail bond business for years. He had been a widower, and he had one daughter, Ruth. He will be missed.

Then the anchorman started talking about something else. I couldn't believe what I had just heard--Pete--dead. He and I had been friends for a long time.

I got out of my recliner chair and left the living room and went into the den and sat down at my desk and called the Bellingham police department so I could talk to Craig Pritchard, a lieutenant in the detective unit of the Bellingham police department, about Pete's death. He and Pete had been friends for a long time, too.

When I got a hold of the Bellingham police department, I asked for Craig, and then I was put in touch with him.

"Pritchard," he said when he came on.

"Hello. Craig?" I said. "It's Frank Hurley."

"Frank. How are ya?"

"Not too good, I'm afraid. I just heard about Pete Gorman's death on TV."

"Yeah," Craig said flatly. "I'm investigating it."

"You're on the case?"

"That's right."

"Well, I'd like to go over there and talk to you about it."

"All right. I'll be here."

"Great," Then I hung up.

The Bellingham police department was just outside downtown Bellingham.

I was here at the Bellingham police department now. Inside the detective unit, and inside Craig's office, and sitting in front of Craig's desk, and Craig was sitting behind his desk.

"What can you tell me about Pete's death?" I asked Craig.

Then Craig told me everything about what he and his men had discovered at Pete's office, and it was the same as what the TV anchorman had said.

"So it looks like someone had killed Pete and had stolen his briefcase," I deduced after Craig had finished. "Nothing else had happened at Pete's office."

"That's right. It looks like the killer knew what he wanted and got it and killed Pete to keep Pete from keeping the killer from taking the briefcase, and to keep Pete from telling anyone who stole his briefcase."

"Well, then if the killer stole Pete's briefcase and killed Pete himself, then that would mean that there must have been something inside Pete's briefcase that the killer wanted, and he may not have wanted Pete to tell anyone what it was that was inside Pete's briefcase that the killer wanted, and maybe Pete knew what it was that was inside his briefcase that the killer wanted."

"There is that possibility."

"And if the killer killed Pete to keep Pete from telling anyone who stole his briefcase, then that would mean that Pete saw the killer's face and recognized the person who killed him."

"There's that possibility, too."

"Did you find out if Pete were working on something that caused his death?"

"Well, we did find something, but we can't say it has to do with Pete's death. It doesn't look like it's connected to Pete's death. It was the last thing Pete had been working on before he died: a few days ago, he bailed out of jail a man who was accused of stealing some money from one of his bosses. Then that man who was accused of stealing from one of his bosses was killed. He was run over. And he was killed shortly before his case went to trial."

"Oh, yeah. Wasn't that man Glenn Mannering? Acting manager of Tools and Machines, Inc.?"

"Yeah. That's the one."

"Yeah. I heard about that on TV. He said he was at work one day, and then he heard this ruckus inside Merv Kent's office. Merv Kent was the manager of Tools and Machines, Inc. He went inside Kent's office to see what was the matter, and then he saw Kent slumped over his desk. It looked like he had been stabbed to death. There was blood on his desk. Then he said he saw Hank Norton, the assistant manager of Tools and Machines, Inc. inside Kent's office, and he had a knife in his hand. Then he said that he and Norton had a fight, and then Norton knocked him out. When he came to, there was a cash box in his hand, and several people were standing around him. Then he said that Norton came back into the room and told them he had called the police. Then the police came and arrested Mannering for stealing that cash box because Norton had said that he saw Mannering steal the cash box. He said he saw Mannering take the cash box out of Kent's drawer and start to escape,

but he didn't see Mannering kill Kent. Then Mannering told the police that he had heard something going on inside Kent's office and went to investigate and saw Kent slumped over his desk and Norton standing in front of his desk with a knife in his hand. Norton denied this. He said he didn't have a knife in his hand. Then the police took Mannering away to police headquarters and booked him for theft. Who killed Kent and why haven't been determined yet."

"That's it. Then one day Pete came along and bailed Mannering out of jail a few days before Mannering was supposed to go to trial for being accused of stealing Kent's cash box. But there was something interesting about how Pete paid the bail: he paid in cash. And he couldn't tell us who wanted Mannering bailed out of jail."

"Well, that's interesting."

"Yes, it is. And then Mannering was killed a few days before he was supposed to go to trial for being accused of stealing that

cash box, and a few days after that, Pete was killed and his briefcase was stolen."

"Think there might be a connection?"

"I don't know about that. Maybe there is. Both occurrences did happen a few days between each other. Maybe there *is* a connection, or maybe it was coincidental that both occurrences happened a few days between each other."

"What about Norton? What have you done about him? Mannering did say he heard this ruckus coming from inside Kent's office and went into Kent's office to investigate and saw Norton inside Kent's office and standing in front of Kent's desk and had a knife in his hand and saw Kent slumped over his desk and saw blood on Kent's desk."

"Yeah. And I find that pretty interesting. And because of this, I put him under twenty-four hour surveillance. It looked like he killed Kent. And when he saw Mannering come into the room, he must have

overpowered him and rendered him unconscious and framed him for stealing that cash box."

"Yeah. And I find *that* interesting, too: that cash box. Why did Norton frame Mannering for the theft of that cash box? Why not frame him for Kent's murder?"

"Yeah. I find that interesting, too. And both Mannering and Norton said that they saw Kent slumped over his desk and that there was blood on the desk. Neither one of them said they killed Kent."

"Well, one of them's lying. But it's too bad we can't ask Mannering if he's lying or telling the truth. So that leaves Norton."

"Yeah, it does."

"Well, one thing's for certain: Norton couldn't kill Mannering right after he killed Kent. If he did, he'd have to explain two killings in the same place. And that would make matter worse for Norton instead of better."

"Of course."

"What's the latest surveillance report on Norton?"

"The same as before: he's going on as before. He's taking care of his own business. He's acting like this robbery and murder never happened."

"Well, that would be natural for him to keep busy so he can get his mind off of what happened. And to help him forget what happened. That is, if he didn't kill Kent. Or, maybe he *did* kill Kent and he knows that the police are following and watching him. And because of this, he has to act like he didn't kill Kent."

"Yeah. And then he'll probably go back to doing whatever it is that has to do with the robbery and murder after the police stop following and watching him. That is, if he did kill Kent. And we will have to stop following and watching him after a while since Mannering's case about his being accused of stealing that cash box won't go to trial."

"Of course. That person who ran Mannering over after Mannering was bailed out of jail. Did anyone see his running Mannering over, and did they see what kind of car he drove?"

"No. It all happened so fast. Some people saw Mannering come out of his place one day, and then they saw this car appear and run Mannering over and disappear. They didn't even see who drove the car, and they didn't even see the license plate number of the car, and they didn't even see what kind of car it was. They only saw what color the car was. It was black."

"I see. I imagine you tried to find the car?"

"Yeah, we did. But we couldn't find it. My guess is that whoever drove the car must have gotten rid of it. He can't use it again."

"No, he can't. And then there's that briefcase of Pete's that the killer stole. No doubt he got rid of the contents of the briefcase after he examined it. He probably

had to. He couldn't keep it. It'd be dangerous to him if he would."

"Yeah."

"And he must have gotten rid of Pete's briefcase itself, too. He couldn't afford to be seen with that."

"Of course. And then there's something else: Vicki Weylon, personnel assistant for Tools and Machines, Inc., and Mannering's former fiancé, told us that she was at work at the time that Mannering was accused of stealing that cash box, and when Kent was killed. She came out of the bathroom to go back to work, and then she heard something. She said the sound came from Kent's office. At that time, the door to Kent's office was locked, and it sounded like someone was inside Kent's office, and he locked the door. Ms Weylon didn't think anything of it when she went back to work, but when she noticed all of the people inside Kent's office making sure that Mannering won't escape since Norton had told them

that Mannering had tried to steal Kent's cash box, and that he had called the police, Ms Weylon wondered about this. She thought that what she heard inside Kent's office after she left the bathroom, and that she saw all of those people standing inside Kent's office to make sure that Mannering won't escape after Norton had told them that Mannering tried to steal Kent's cash box, and that he had called the police, were connected."

Then, my eyes and mouth widened. Then, I spoke: "Unless perhaps Norton had closed the door after he killed Kent and overpowered and rendered Mannering unconscious to make sure that no one would see his framing Mannering for stealing that cash box. That would have to be it. But no one had seen Norton kill Kent before that. Although the door to Kent's office may have been open at that time, or it may not have been open at that time."

"Of course."

"Yeah."

"Well, we dusted the inside door knob and the lock on the inside of the door to Kent's office for fingerprints, but there were no fingerprints on the knob or the lock of the door."

"Which means that Norton must have put a handkerchief over the lock of the door, and then he must have locked the door. Then he must have framed Mannering for stealing that cash box. And he must have wiped the door knob clean, too, to make sure that his fingerprints won't be on the knob of the door as well as his fingerprints won't be on the lock of the door."

"Of course. And after he framed Mannering for stealing that cash box, he unlocked the door, putting the handkerchief on the lock of the door to make sure his fingerprints won't be on the lock of the door, and then he put the handkerchief on the knob of the door and opened the door, and then he looked outside Kent's office to make sure that no one won't see his putting his

handkerchief into his pocket, and no one did, and then he went and called the police and told the other employees what Mannering did and that he called the police and told them to make sure Mannering doesn't escape until the police got there and arrested him."

"Yeah. That has to be it."

"Yeah. But it's too bad we won't be able to prove it since there's not going to be any trial on Mannering's being accused of stealing that cash box, since Mannering himself is dead."

"I know."

"We'll have no choice but to close the case and forget the whole thing."

"Yeah. Did you search Norton's place?"

"No. We had no grounds to. We only had Ms Weylon's theory about what she heard inside Kent's office and what she saw after that. But that wasn't enough grounds to search Norton's place."

"Yeah, of course. What about Pete's place? Did you search that?"

"Yes, we did. But we didn't find anything there."

"Which meant that the answer had to be inside his briefcase."

"Yeah. But I don't think we're going to see that. Whoever stole his briefcase must have examined the contents of the briefcase and destroyed it, and then he must have destroyed the briefcase itself."

"Of course."

I was walking out of the police department and into the parking lot now. I had finished talking to Craig about Pete's death. Now I reached my Dodge and got into it and drove out of the parking lot and back to my place. The conversation I had just had with Craig about Pete's death helped me decide what to do today: stay home. I wasn't in any condition today to do anything because of Pete's death. Maybe tomorrow I could do something.

CHAPTER II

My place was on Liberty Street.

I was here at my place now. Inside the kitchen. I was making a meat loaf on sourdough sandwich when I heard the phone ring and I heard the answering machine take the message. Although I didn't hear who was leaving the message, and I didn't hear the message the person was leaving.

After I made the sandwich, I left the kitchen and ate the sandwich and went into the den and played back the message. "Mr. Hurley?" a female voice said. "This is Vicki Weylon. I'm sorry to disturb you at home, but I'd like to make an appointment with you to talk to you about something." Then I heard the phone number Vicky had left on my answering machine, and then I heard

Vicki hang up. After that, the answering machine shut itself off, ready to record a new message. Then I called Vicki at the phone number she had left on my answering machine.

"Hello?" a woman said.

"Hello," I said. "Is this Vicki Weylon?"

"Yes. This is Vicki Weylon."

"Ms Weylon, this is Frank Hurley. I got your message on my answering machine saying you'd like to make an appointment with me to talk to me about something."

"That's right. I'm sorry to disturb you at home."

"That's all right."

"I would like to make an appointment with you to talk to you about something."

"What's it about?"

"Well, I'd like to tell you about it when we meet."

"All right," I then said. "Would Monday morning at ten o'clock at my office be all right with you?"

"Yes."

"Do you know how to get to my office?"

"No, I don't."

Then I told her how to get to my office, and then she repeated the directions to me.

"That's right," I said after she had finished. "See you Monday morning at ten o'clock at my office." Then I hung up, and then I wrote down on the pad on my desk where and when my appointment with Vicki was going to be. After that, I looked at the clock on my desk. Ten thirty-nine.

I had two days before I keep my appointment with Vicki. I was glad that she hadn't made an appointment with me for today. I still wasn't in any mood to do anything because of Pete's death. And there was nothing else about the appointment with Vicki I could do today, either. Because I was still in no mood to do anything because of Pete's death. So I left the den and went back into the living room and sat back down in my recliner chair and continued watching

TV and continued sipping my coffee and continued eating my sandwich.

I continued staying in and watched TV until midnight, and then I went to bed without setting the alarm clock for a time I wanted to get up at today.

The next day, I felt better. Not as upset about Pete's death as I had been. Then I finished all of the coffee I had made, and then I got out of my recliner chair so I could go into the den and call Craig and talk to him.

I was leaving the chair when I heard the phone ring. I rushed out of the living room and into the den and picked up the receiver of the phone and said hello.

"Hello," a male voice said. "Frank?"

"Yeah?"

"It's Craig Pritchard."

"Craig. How are ya?"

"Fine. You?"

"Better than yesterday. Not as upset about Pete's death as I was yesterday."

"Well, that's good. How would you like to have lunch with me."

"Yeah. Where and when?"

An hour later, I was here at Boston Pizza. It is a wonderful restaurant just outside Bellis Fair. I had eaten here before. It was one of my favorite places to eat at.

I was sitting here at a booth and sipping Coke and waiting for Craig to show up.

Craig did show up. He came into the restaurant and walked over to me. He was tall, lean, pale, had the face of a lizard, and he was wearing a grayish suit, a white shirt, a burgundy tie, and black leather shoes.

When he reached my booth, he sat down on the other side of the booth.

A waitress appeared and gave us menus, and then we looked at the menus and the waitress disappeared.

After we decided what we wanted for lunch, the same waitress came back and took our orders and the menus and left.

"I was about to call you when you called me," I told Craig. "I wanted to talk to you about something else that has to do with Pete's death and about what happened in Merv Kent's office that we didn't talk about yesterday: there was that handkerchief that Norton must have used to keep his fingerprints from getting on the lock of the door, and the inside knob of the door. It may have been the same handkerchief that he used to put his knife in after he killed Kent. But he may have put the knife in the handkerchief and put the handkerchief in his pocket after he used the handkerchief to keep from getting his fingerprints on the knob and lock of the door. But when he was using the handkerchief to keep his fingerprints from getting on the knob and lock of the door, he may have laid the knife down on the desk. He probably knew it was all right for him to do that. Since there was blood on Kent's desk."

Craig thought about that. Then he spoke: "Yeah. There is that possibility. And he probably knew that it would be all right for him to put the knife wrapped up in the handkerchief inside his pocket, since there was no blood on him or on his clothes."

"Yeah. And then at the first opportunity he got rid of the knife and the handkerchief. He couldn't use them again."

"No. He couldn't."

"Especially since his fingerprints must have been on that knife. And if they *were* on that knife, then that would mean that Kent must have said or done something that made Norton take the knife out of his pocket and kill Kent with it."

"Yeah. Which brings up those three questions; why did Norton kill Kent, and why did Norton kill Kent inside Kent's office, and why did Norton kill Kent at that particular time?"

"Yeah. And there's what happened inside Kent's office and Mannering's death and

Pete's death. These killings did happen a few days between each other. But I think these killings are connected."

"Oh?"

"Yeah. Mannering must have been bailed out of jail and killed because of what he saw inside Kent's office. Because the killer didn't want Mannering to tell anyone what he saw inside Kent's office. He didn't want Mannering's case to go to trial. If Mannering weren't killed, and if his case *did* go to trial, then the truth about what happened inside Kent's office would come out into the open. And then there's Pete's death. Whoever had him bail Mannering out of jail to kill Mannering killed Pete to keep him from telling anyone who it was that had him bail Mannering out of jail to kill Mannering, and he also stole Pete's briefcase to find out if there were evidence inside it that said he was the one wanted Pete to bail Mannering out of jail. Then he discovered the evidence and destroyed it and the briefcase itself."

Craig thought about all of this. Then he spoke: "Makes sense."

"Yes, it does. And I had a phone conversation with Vicki Weylon this morning, too. She made an appointment with me to talk to me about something."

"Oh?"

"Yeah."

"Maybe she wants to talk to you about Kent's death. Or maybe she wants to talk to you about something else."

"I'll know Monday which of the two it is." Then I told Craig where and when my appointment with Vicki was.

Craig and I were eating our lunches now. Craig was having a nice juicy hamburger and washing it down with beer, and *I* was having fish and chips and washing *that* down with beer. Then for dessert the both of us had Boston cream pie.

We felt better after we had eaten. Now we left nice tips on the table, and then Craig paid his check and mine, and then Craig and

I left Boston Pizza, and then Craig got into his blue gray Honda Accord and drove back to work, and *I* got into *my* car and drove back home.

When I got here, I went into the den and got on the computer to find out what I can about Vicki. She had lived in Boise, Idaho and had worked as a personnel assistant in the main office of a place that made tools and machines. Then she had moved here to Bellingham and had gone to work at Tools and Machines, Inc., as a personnel assistant in the main office of Tools and Machines, Inc. Had lived here in Bellingham for a long time. Nice girl. Good citizen. Good credit rating. She could even afford to pay my fee of twenty-five dollars an hour. That is, if I take whatever case she gives me. It'll depend upon what the case is or what I have to do or both. Then I turned the computer off. There wasn't anything else about Vicki I needed to know.

I also refrained from printing out the information I had gotten on Vicki, and I also refrained from opening a file on Vicki. Since I hadn't keep my appointment with her yet, and I didn't know if I were going to take whatever case she gives me.

I also refrained from getting information on Kent and Mannering and printing that out and opening a file on them since I didn't know if Vicki were going to talk to me about them, and since I didn't know if I *were* going to take whatever case she gives me that has to do with them.

And I also refrained from getting information on Pete. Since I already knew him, and I had known him for a long time. And at the moment, there was no reason to get any more information on him, and there was no reason to open a file on him.

I left the den and went into *my* room and got undressed, and then I took a shower and got into my pajamas and bathrobe and slippers, and then I went into the kitchen

and withdrew a bottle of Seven Up from the refrigerator, and then I went into the living room and turned on the TV with the remote control, and then I sat down in my recliner chair and watched TV and sipped the Seven Up until dinner time.

At dinner time, I turned the TV off with the remote control, and then I left the living room and went into *my* room and changed clothes, and then I left my place to go somewhere and get something to eat. I was in the mood to eat out for dinner this time.

Zane Burger was a nice drive in restaurant in Fairhaven on 12th Street. I had eaten there before. It was another good place I liked to eat at.

I was here at Zane Burger now. Sitting at a booth and eating a delicious deluxe cheeseburger and fries and washing them down with a chocolate shake and Pepsi.

I felt better after I had eaten. Then I left Zane Burger and went back to my place.

When I got here to my place, I got undressed and got back into my pajamas and bathrobe and slippers, and then I went into the living room and watched TV until eleven o'clock.

At eleven o'clock, I turned the TV off, and then I went into *my* room and turned on the light, and then I set the alarm clock for a time I wanted to get up at tomorrow morning, and then I put my Smith and Wesson .38 Special underneath the pillow, and then I got out of my bathrobe and slippers, and then I turned off the light and got into bed and went to sleep. Tomorrow I was going to keep my appointment with Vicki.

The next day, I was sitting here inside my office and checking the mail and sipping coffee while I waited for Vicki to show up and keep her appointment with me.

CHAPTER III

The front door of my office opened, and then a woman stepped into my office, and then she closed the door.

She was tall, plump, had long, thick platinum blonde hair, blue eyes, an almost straight nose, a creamy pallor complexion, full moist pink lips, and she was wearing a short sleeve white turtleneck sweater and a cream white tight fitting midi dress and flesh tone stockings and shiny white high heel shoes, and her right hand was grasping the strap of her shiny white shoulder strap handbag, which was resting on her right shoulder.

I stood up when I saw her come in and close the door and smiled at her.

"Ms Vicki Weylon?" I asked her.

She smiled at me, too. "Yes," she said.
"I'm Vicki Weylon. Mr. Frank Hurley?"

"Yes. I'm Frank Hurley."

Then Vicki walked over to me and we shook hands. Her grip was firm yet soft.

I asked her if she'd like to have some coffee, but she said she didn't want any. Then I asked her to sit down and she did and so did I.

"I understand that you look into anything secret or illegal," Vicki said to me.

"That's right. I do." I said.

"I'm the personnel assistant of Tools and Machines, Inc., a company here in Bellingham that makes all kinds of tools and machines, and Glenn Mannering was the acting manager of Tools and Machines, Inc., and he was also my fiancé." Then Vicki told me about Mannering being arrested for stealing that cash box of Kent's office, and she also told me who Kent had been. "I was at work when I heard about Glenn's being arrested for stealing Merv's cash box," Vicki

continued. "I came out of the bathroom to go back to work, and then I heard this sound. It sounded like what I heard came from inside Merv's office. It sounded like the door of his office was being closed and locked. At that time I didn't think anything of it. It was probably nothing. Then I went back to work. Then I heard that the police came and arrested Glenn for stealing Merv's cash box, and then they took him to police headquarters. I also heard that Glenn said that he didn't steal the cash box. He said he heard this ruckus inside Merv's office and went there to see what was the matter. Then he noticed Hank Norton, the assistant manager of Tools and Machines, Inc., standing at Merv's desk with a knife in his hand, and Merv was slumped over his desk, and there was blood on his desk. Then Hank overpowered Glenn and rendered him unconscious, and then Glenn came to and noticed he was on the floor, and Merv's cash box was in his hand, and there were some

people inside Merv's office and standing around Glenn to make sure he doesn't escape. Hank said he saw Glenn trying to steal the cash box and stopped him from stealing it and called the police and told those people to keep Glenn from escaping until the police show up. Then Glenn told the people who were keeping him from escaping that he saw Hank standing at Merv's desk with the knife in his hand and that Merv was slumped over his desk, and that there was blood on his desk, but Hank said he denied being inside the room when Merv was slumped over his desk and blood was on his desk. He did say however that he did see Merv slumped over his desk and blood was on his desk when he went into Merv to see Merv about something, and then he saw Glenn take Merv's cash box out of Merv's desk and start to escape. When I heard about all of this, I wondered about that door to Merv's office being closed and locked. I told the police about this, and they

re-examined Merv's office. They found that there were no fingerprints on the door knob and the lock on the inside of the door of Merv's office."

"Which meant that the person who was inside Merv's office must have made sure he didn't get his fingerprints on the door knob and the lock of the door when he did what he did inside Merv's office."

"That's right. Now, of course, the first time the police examined Merv's office was when they arrested Glenn for stealing Merv's cash box. But they didn't find any evidence inside Merv's office that said something else happened inside Merv's office as well as Merv had been killed inside his office. And they didn't find any evidence inside Merv's office that said something else happened inside Merv's office at the time Hank said he went into Merv's office to see Merv about something and saw Glenn stealing Merv's cash box and saw Merv slumped over his desk and saw blood on his desk, either. Now

it's obvious that something happened inside Merv's office that has to do with his death, and it has to do with Glenn's being accused of stealing Merv's cash box, and someone didn't want anyone seeing what he did inside Merv's office. That would explain why the door to Merv's office was closed and locked. He closed and locked the door to make sure that no one would see what he did. I want to know what happened inside Merv's office."

"Well, there's no guarantee I can find that out."

"I know. Just do what you can."

"I don't know if you know this or not, but Glenn was bailed out of jailed and killed after he was arrested for stealing Merv's cash box and before his case was supposed to go to trial. I heard about this on TV."

"Yes. I do know that."

Out of curiosity, I asked her this next question: "Did *you* bail Glenn out of jail?"

"No. I didn't. I was going to bail him out of jail, but then I heard someone else had a bail bonds man bail him out of jail; I also heard that the bail bonds man used cash to bail Glenn out of jail. But I don't know who had the bail bonds man bail Glenn out of jail. And I heard that the bail bonds man couldn't tell anyone who wanted him to bail Glenn out of jail. Why do you ask?"

"Routine," Then I told Vicki everything that Craig and I had talked about having to do with Kent's death, and Mannering's being accused of stealing Kent's cash box, and Mannering's being bailed out on bail, and his being killed before his case was supposed to go to trial, and about Pete's death after I had heard about Pete's death, and before Vicki had called me and had made her appointment with me. "I'm sorry I didn't tell you all of this when you were telling me why you need a private investigator," I continued. "But I wanted to let you tell me why you need a private investigator your own way."

"I see. I understand. And thank you."

"You're welcome. I'll take the case, Ms Weylon."

"Oh, thank you, Mr. Hurley."

"You're welcome, Ms Weylon. My fee is twenty five dollars an hour."

"I can pay it and I will."

"Good. Have you told anyone that you were going to see a private investigator about your wanting to know what happened inside Merv's office?"

"No, I haven't. I thought it best not to tell anyone I was going to see a private investigator about what happened inside Merv's office until I see the private investigator."

"Good idea. Don't tell anyone that you *have* talked to a private investigator about what happened inside Merv's office. It'll depend upon how I'll have to look into what happened inside Merv's office."

"All right."

"And don't tell anyone about the conversation that Lieutenant Pritchard and I had about Kent's death and Mannering's accused of stealing Kent's cash box and about Mannering's being bailed out of jail and his being killed before his case was supposed to go to trial and about Pete's death after I heard about Pete's death and before you called me and made our appointment, either. What we have about all of these things are theories. We don't have any facts. And until or unless we have facts, Lieutenant Pritchard and I can't tell anyone about these theories, and you shouldn't tell anyone about these theories until or unless we have facts, either."

"I understand. And I won't tell anyone about these theories until or unless we have facts."

"Good. Now. If there isn't anything else, I'll get started on the case."

Vicki smiled. "No," she then said. "There isn't anything else." Then she stood up.

So did I.

Then the both of us shook hands.

"I'll keep in touch," I then told Vicki.

"Thank you for letting me talk to you about the case, Mr. Hurley," Vicki said to me.

"You're welcome, Ms Weylon," I told her.

"And Ms Weylon. Try not to worry. And Ms Weylon. I'm sorry about your fiancé."

"Thank you,"

"You're welcome,"

Then Vicki left.

CHAPTER IV

I looked at my watch. Eleven ten.

I was getting hungry, so I might as well eat while I had the chance to eat. I didn't know when I was going to get the chance to eat again. And because of this, I decided to eat before I get started on the case. So I left the office and looked around for a good place to eat at.

Mambo Italiano was a nice wonderful Italian restaurant in Fairhaven on 12th Street. I had eaten there before. It was another good place I liked to eat at.

I was here at Mambo Italiano now. Sitting at a table and sipping red wine and eating spaghetti Marinara.

I felt better after I had eaten. Then I left a nice tip on the table and paid the check and

left Mambo Italiano and went back to the office.

My office was on Cornwall Avenue.

When I got here, I got behind my desk and took a manila folder out of one of the drawers of my desk so I could write the title of the case on it. I was going to need to open a file on the case before I start the case.

I wrote KENT INCIDENT CASE on the folder since Vicki had hired me to find out what it was that happened inside Kent's office. And the other things in the case still didn't connect. And because of this, I wasn't going to call the case whatever I wanted to call it.

After I finished writing KENT INCIDENT CASE on the folder, I got on the computer and wrote a statement of everything that Vicki and I had talked about that had to do with the Kent incident case, and then I turned on the printer and printed out that information and put it in the file on the Kent incident case. Then I got back on the

computer so I could print out the information I had gotten on Vicki and put it in the folder. I did that. Then I got back on the computer so I could find out what I can about Hank Norton. Hank Norton had lived in Reno, Nevada most of his life, and he had worked at a place that made and sold typewriters, working in their main office as office manager. Then one day he moved here to Bellingham, did several jobs here in Bellingham until he went to work at Tools and Machines, Inc. Good citizen.

After I read the information on Norton, I printed it out and put it in the file on the Kent incident case, and then I got back on the computer to find out what I can about Kent. He had been born and raised here in Bellingham. Had lived here in Bellingham all of his life. He had been the manager of Tools and Machines, Inc. Good citizen. Then I printed out the information on Kent after I read it and put it into the file on the Kent incident case, and then I got back on the

computer to find out what I can about Glenn Mannering.

Mannering had lived in Seattle, Washington for several years. Worked at a company that made and sold cell phones, working in their marketing division as a marketer. Then one day he had moved up here to Bellingham, and then he had gone to work at Tools and Machines, Inc. Good citizen.

After I read the information on Mannering, I printed it out and put it into the file on the Kent incident case, and then I turned the computer and the printer off. I wasn't going to need to use them again right now. Not only that, I couldn't read and print out the information on Pete and put it into the file on the Kent incident case. There was nothing in the case that connected to him. But maybe there will be later. Or, maybe there won't be later. I could only find out which it was going to be later. Then I got on the phone and called Craig at work.

"Pritchard," he said when he came on.

"Hello. Craig?" I said. "It's Frank Hurley."

"Frank. How are ya?"

"Fine. You?"

"Fine."

Then I told Craig about my meeting with Vicki.

"I see," Craig said after I had finished.

"Have you discontinued the surveillance on Hank Norton?"

"Yeah, I have."

"Well, that's good. That might help us find out what happened inside Merv Kent's office. If Norton finds out I'm looking into what happened inside Kent's office, and he's responsible for killing Kent, then he's going to appear and say or do something to indicate he is responsible for killing Kent or both."

Craig thought about that. Then he spoke: "Yeah."

"Yeah. I haven't worked out a strategy yet, but when I do, I'll carry out that strategy."

"Good. If you make any progress in the case, let me know, will ya? Maybe I can help, too."

"I'll do that."

"Good," Then Craig told me where and when Pete's funeral was.

"I'll be there, I said quietly after Craig had finished.

"Anything else, Frank?"

"No. That's it."

"All right. Talk to you later."

"Talk to you later, Craig," Then I hung up. Then I looked at my watch. Twelve twenty-four.

I had time to search Kent's place and Mannering's place and Norton's place before I attend Pete's funeral. Pete's funeral was two days from now. And I was going to need to search Kent's place and Mannering's place and Norton's place before I work out and

execute that strategy. So I looked for Kent's address and Mannering's place and Norton's address in the file on the Kent incident case and found them, and then I got out my pen and notebook and wrote down the addresses in my notebook.

Kent's place was on Harris Avenue. It was a big white two story house with a blue gray roof and a matching garage.

I was driving away from Kent's place now. I hadn't found anything at Kent's place that could tell me what Vicki wanted to know. I hadn't bugged Kent's place or tapped his landline phone, either. Since Kent was dead.

Mannering's place was on Garden Street. It was an apartment.

I was driving away from Mannering's place now. I hadn't found anything there that could tell me what Vicki wanted to know. I hadn't bugged Mannering's place or tapped his landline phone, either. Since Mannering was dead.

Norton's place was on James Street. It was a big white two story house with a forest green roof and a matching garage.

I was driving away from Norton's place now. I had searched his place. But I hadn't found anything inside it that could tell Vicki what she wanted to know. I had also bugged Norton's place and had tapped his landline phone. I was going to need to. Because of what Craig and I suspected of Norton. Now I took out of my pocket the radio to the bug I had put inside Norton's place, and the radio to the tap I had put inside Norton's landline phone, and put them on the front seat of my car and turned them on and listened to them. Although nothing was going on at Norton's place right now. But, of course, that didn't that nothing would go on at his place later. I also looked at my watch. Three fifty-six. I had time to go back to the office and write my report on the results of my search of Kent's place and Mannering's place and Norton's place before I call it a day. There

wasn't going to be anything else in the case I could do today.

I was here at the office now. Sitting behind my desk and writing the report on the results of my search of Kent's place and Mannering's place and Norton's place.

After I finished writing the report, I turned on the printer and printed out the report and put it into the file on the Kent incident case, and then I turned the computer and the printer off and got up and put the file on the Kent incident case into the filing cabinet, and then I locked up the cabinet. Then I looked at my watch. Four eighteen.

Time now for me to call it a day. So I stepped out of my office and locked it, and then I got into my car and left the office and looked around for a good place to eat at. I was in the mood to eat out for dinner this time.

Subway was on Samish Way. It was a nice restaurant that made sandwiches. I had

eaten there before. It was another good place I liked to eat at.

I was here at Subway now. Sitting at a table and eating a foot long tuna sandwich on honey oat bread and washing it down with Pepsi.

I felt better after I had eaten. Now I had another Pepsi. I also thought about the case.

If Norton were responsible for killing Kent, and he hid something at his place that had to do with his killing Kent, then Norton had hidden it real well inside his place, or it was hidden out in the open. In plain sight. Or maybe that something was somewhere else and not at his place.

I finished the Pepsi, and then I went home.

When I got here to my place, I got undressed and took a shower, and then I got into my pajamas and bathrobe and slippers and watched TV until eleven o'clock.

At eleven, I turned the TV off, and then I went into *my* room and turned the light on,

and then I set the alarm clock for a time I wanted to get up at tomorrow morning, and then I put my gun underneath the pillow, and then I turned the light off, and then I got out of my bathrobe and slippers and got into bed and went to sleep. Tomorrow I was going to stay home and work out the strategy for attacking the case and listen in on Norton's place. I was going to do the legwork in the case after Pete's funeral. Between now and the time Pete's funeral starts, I was going to make myself available for Pete's funeral.

CHAPTER V

The next day, I was up early. I had made and had eaten a delicious bacon and scrambled egg breakfast. Now I was sitting inside the living room and watching TV and sipping coffee and listening in on Norton's place. The radio to the bug I had put inside Norton's place was on the coffee table, and so were the radio to the tap I had put inside Norton's landline phone and my digital recorder and pen and notebook.

I was also able to think about how I was going to attack the case. And did. Since Craig had called off the surveillance on Norton, that was going to help. I was going to have to use a maneuver that wouldn't tip my hand or scare Norton off. But telling Norton that Vicki had hired me to find out what had happened inside Kent's office

wouldn't work. I'd come to a dead end if I would. Norton could say whatever he wanted to say about that. And then it'd be Vicki's word and mine against Norton's. And because of this, I might have to abandon the investigation, or come up with some other way to attack the case and use that way to attack the case, a way that would be effective.

And I hadn't tapped Norton's cell phone. Although I didn't know if he had a cell phone or not. But if I find out he has a cell phone in the course of my investigation, I'll tap it. Then, I stopped suddenly and looked at the radio to the tap I had put inside Norton's landline phone. Then I scooped up the remote control and turned down the volume on the TV, and then I turned on the digital recorder and listened to what I was hearing on the radio. I heard dialing. I also saw the number that was being dialed being displayed on the board of the radio. Then I looked at the clock on the cabinet on the

other side of the living room and recorded the time on the digital recorder. Then I continued listening to what was being transmitted on the radio and wrote down in my notebook the number that was on the board of the radio. Then, I heard a phone ring.

"Hello," a man said. I didn't recognize his voice.

"Hello. Dirk? It's Hank."

"Hank. How are ya?"

"Fine. You?"

"Fine."

"I think we can resume our business now. The heat has died down."

"It has?"

"Yeah. I haven't seen them follow me. Which means that they must have had to stop following me. Now that the investigation's over."

"Well, that's nice to hear."

"Yes, it is. Well, I got to get to work now. Just thought I'd let you know that we can resume our business now."

"Well, thanks for telling me, Hank."

"No problem. See ya later, Dirk."

"Yeah. See ya later, Hank," Then Dirk hung up.

So did Norton. And that had to be Norton who had called this Dirk. Whoever Dirk was.

And I turned the digital recorder off. Then I took my notebook with me and ran into the den and put the notebook on the desk and looked at the phone number I had written down in my notebook. Then I got out my reverse phone directory to find out who the phone number belonged to. It did belong to a man named Dirk. And Dirk's last name was Benton. And I also found out from the reverse phone directory Dirk's address. Then I got on the computer to find out what I could about Dirk Benton. He had lived in Portland, Oregon for a few years and had

worked in construction. Doing several things in construction before he had become a construction foreman. Then he had moved here to Bellingham, and he was still a construction foreman. Good citizen.

I turned the computer off after I had found out what I had wanted to find out about Benton. Then I thought.

All Norton had told Benton in that phone conversation they had just had was that they could resume their business now that the investigation was over. Maybe they were talking about the investigation of Kent's death, but they had been careful what to say about the investigation of Kent's death since they had been talking about the investigation of Kent's death on the phone. Or, maybe they were talking about something else. But whatever it was that they had been talking about, it was too soon to say if the conversation they had had to do with the investigation of Kent's death, or, if it had to do with something else. But one

thing was for certain: whatever it was that they had been talking about, they had talked about it shortly after Craig had called off the surveillance on Norton. And because of this, I was going to have to investigate Benton as well as do the other things in the investigation. But I was going to do this after I attend Pete's funeral. I knew I could do that. But what I could do today is print out the information I had gotten on Benton and write and print out the reason why I print out the information on Benton. Which was I was going to investigate Benton as well as do the other things in the investigation. Maybe Benton would have something to do with Kent's death. Or maybe Benton would have something to do with something else. And after I print out the information on Benton, and after I write and print out the reason why I print out the information on Benton, I get dressed and take the information with me and go over to my office and put the information in the file on the Kent incident

case and put the file in the filing cabinet and locked up the cabinet. And did. Then I came back here to my place and got undressed and took a shower, and then I got into my pajamas and bathrobe and slippers and watched TV and continued listening in Norton's place and continued thinking of a way to attack the case.

I came up with a way to attack the case, and then I looked at the clock on the cabinet on the other side of the living room. Twelve fourteen.

There wasn't anything else about the case I could do until after Pete's funeral. Between now and the time I go to Pete's funeral, I could do whatever I wanted to do. So I turned the TV off with the remote control and collected the radio to the bug I had put inside Norton's place, and the radio to the tap I had put inside Norton's landline phone, and my digital recorder and my pen and notebook, and then I went into *my* room and got dressed and left my place and went

over to Zane Burger to have lunch. I was in the mood to eat out for lunch this time, and I was in the mood to eat at Zane Burger for lunch again, too.

I was here at Zane Burger now. Sitting at a table and eating a deluxe cheeseburger and fries and washing them down with a chocolate shake and Pepsi.

I felt better after I had eaten. Then I left Zane Burger and went home and got undressed and took a shower, and then I got into my pajamas and bathrobe and slippers and watched TV until five o'clock.

At five o'clock, I got hungry. So I went into the kitchen and made a grilled cheese sandwich and some chicken Top Ramen and ate the sandwich and the Top Ramen and washed them down with a bottle of Seven Up and continued watching TV, and I continued watching TV until eleven o'clock.

At eleven o'clock, I turned the TV off and went into *my* room and turned on the light, and then I set the alarm clock for a time I

wanted to get up at tomorrow morning, and then I put my gun underneath the pillow, and then I took my bathrobe and slippers off, and then I turned off the light and got into bed and went to sleep.

The next day, I was up early. I had made and had eaten a delicious ham and scrambled egg breakfast. Now I was here in the living room and watching TV and sipping coffee, and I kept on watching TV until it was time to go to Pete's funeral. Then I turned the TV off and went into *my* room and got undressed, and then I went into the bathroom and shaved and showered, and then I went back into *my* room and got dressed. Then I left my place and went over to Pete's place where his funeral was going to be.

Pete's place was on Prospect Street. It was a big light brown one story house with a dark blue gray roof and a matching garage.

I was here at Pete's place now. Talking to people who knew Pete. Some of them were

people I knew. The rest of them were people I didn't know. Pete's daughter, Ruth Gorman, was here at the funeral, too. She was medium height, plump, had long, thick black hair, brown eyes, a creamy pallor complexion, thin red lips, and she was wearing a three piece black suit, a white shirt, no tie, open collar, and black high heel shoes, and the strap of her shiny black shoulder strap handbag was resting on her left shoulder, and her left hand was grasping the strap of her purse.

I talked to Ruth. Offering her my condolences. I knew Ruth. She and I had known each other for a long time. I didn't tell her about the job that Vicki had hired me to do, though. Since I didn't know if Pete's death had any connection to Kent's death and Mannering's death and Mannering's being accused of stealing Kent's cash box.

I also moved around inside Pete's house and talked to other people. I also talked to

Craig and Trudy Warner. Trudy had known Pete for a long time, too. Trudy was a temporary secretary. She was also an operative of mine. She helped me out on my cases whenever I needed help on cases. She was tall, slender, had long thick red hair with some brown streaks in it, brown eyes, a tapering oval shaped face, a creamy pallor complexion, full moist burgundy lips, and she was wearing a black waist length coat and a matching midi skirt and a white blouse and flesh tone stockings and shiny black high heel shoes, and her right hand was grasping the strap of her shiny white shoulder strap handbag, which was resting on her right shoulder.

Craig was wearing a black suit, a white shirt, no tie, open collar, and black leather shoes.

Craig and I started telling Trudy about the phone conversation that we had had about Pete's death after I had heard about Pete's death on TV, and the theories we had

about Pete's death, then I suggested that we go somewhere else and talk about the phone conversation and the theories in that place privately, and then we looked around inside Pete's place for that place. We found it: a guest room. Then we went into the guest room and one of us closed the door, and then Trudy and I sat down on the bed, and Craig sat down in a chair, and then Craig and I told Trudy about the phone conversation we had had that about Pete's death after I had heard about Pete's death on TV, and the theories we had about Pete's death.

"I see," Trudy said after Craig and I had finished. "Well, I find that interesting: that cash box. If Norton were responsible for Kent's murder, then why did Norton frame Mannering for the theft of that cash box? Why didn't he frame him for Kent's murder? Framing him for Kent's murder would have been the best way to get him out of the way for some reason if he needed to get him out

of the way for some reason. He'd be in jail, and there wouldn't be any bail on murder, or if there *were* bail on murder, the bail would be too much for someone to pay. And because of this, that person would have an impossible time bailing Mannering out of jail."

"You're not alone. I thought about that, too," I said. "And that had to be the reason why Norton framed Mannering for the theft of the cash box and not Kent's murder: the bail on theft wasn't much. And because of this, Norton was able to pay the bail and had Pete pay the bail, and then Mannering was out on bail so Norton could kill Mannering or have Mannering killed to keep Mannering from telling anyone what he saw happen inside Kent's office."

"Makes sense," Craig said.

"Yeah. It does," I said.

"Yeah," Trudy said. "It *does* makes sense."

Then I told Trudy what Vicki had hired me to do. Then I told Craig and Trudy what I

had done so far in my investigation of Kent's death, and what I had discovered so far in my investigation of Kent's death.

"I see," Craig said after I had finished. "But that doesn't mean that this Benton and Norton were talking about the investigation of Kent's death. Maybe they were, but they were being careful what to say about the investigation since they were talking about the investigation on the phone."

"I know," I said. "And then there's the other theory: maybe they weren't talking about the investigation of Kent's death. Maybe they were talking about something else. And then there's something else: this conversation they had happened shortly after you called off the surveillance on Norton. Just like the other occurrences: they happened shortly between each other." Then I told Craig and Trudy what those occurrences were, and when they had happened between each other.

"Yeah," Craig said after I had finished.

"But if these occurrences did happen a few days between each other," Trudy said, "then that would mean that these occurrences are connected. They would have to be."

"Of course. Since they did happen shortly between each other. Which means that whoever's responsible for these occurrences must have wanted to cause them right away so he could get them done. But at the same time, he managed not to expose himself."

"Yeah," Trudy said.

"And since he got all of these occurrences done," Craig said. "the police can't look into them. The case is closed now."

"Yeah," I said.

"And now that the case *is* closed, I can't continue the surveillance on Norton," Craig continued. "Because of this, I had no choice but to discontinue the surveillance on Norton."

"That's too bad," I said. "However it's good." Then I reminded Craig about the conversation that he and I had had about Norton's appearing and saying or doing to indicate he had been responsible for Kent's death and framing Mannering for stealing Kent's cash box or both if he finds out what Vicki had hired me to do. And if he had been responsible for Kent's death and framing Mannering for stealing Kent's cash box. Then I told Trudy about that conversation. Then I told Trudy and Craig how I was going to attack the case.

"If there's anything *I* can do to help," Trudy offered. "let me know."

"I'll do that," I promised.

"And if there's anything *I* can do to help," Craig offered. "let *me* know."

"I'll do that," I promised. Then I spoke to both Craig *and* Trudy: "And remember: we can't tell anyone what Ms Weylon hired me to do and what I discovered in my investigation so far. We can't even tell Ruth."

"I know," Craig said. "I won't tell anyone."

"I won't tell anyone, either," Trudy promised.

"Great," I said. "We're going to have to keep quiet about this until or unless we have some facts."

Then Craig and Trudy and I left the room and talked about something else and moved around inside Pete's place and talked to other people. Not telling them about my investigation of Kent's death and what I had discovered so far in it. We talked about other things instead.

I was leaving Pete's place now. I had attended Pete's funeral. Now I was going home. I was going to stay there after I get there. I wasn't able to do anything else today because of Pete's funeral. It had been depressing. But maybe tomorrow I'll be able to do something.

CHAPTER VI

The next day, I was driving over to Dirk Benton's place so I could search it. I was able to continue my investigation today.

Benton's place was on James Street. It was a nice small white two story house with a forest green roof and a matching garage.

I arrived here at Benton's place and parked my car across the street from Benton's place. Then I looked at Benton's place. I didn't see anything going on inside Benton's place through the windows. Then I looked at Benton's garage. I was going to need to get inside it so I could see if a car or cars were inside the garage or not. And if I find that there isn't a car or cars inside the garage, then that would mean that Benton was somewhere else. And that would give me the opportunity to search Benton's place.

So I took my leather gloves out of my pocket and put them on, and then I got out of the car and sneaked into Benton's backyard and reached Benton's garage. Then I looked around to make sure that no one would see me pick the lock of the side door of Benton's garage and go into the garage. No one did. Then, as quickly and silently as I could, I took my lock pick set out of my pocket and picked the lock of the side door of Benton's garage and got into his garage and closed and locked the door. So far, so good. Then I put my lock pick set back into the pocket. Then I noticed it was dark here inside Benton's garage. So I took my penlight out of my pocket and turned it on, and then I shot the light into the room and moved it around. I didn't see any cars inside Benton's garage. Which meant that Benton wasn't at home. He was somewhere else. And because of this, I could search his place. Since I was here in the garage, I decided to begin the search here in the garage. I did. But I didn't find

anything here inside the garage that could tell me what Vicki wanted to know. Then, I went over to the side door of the garage and peeked out of it to make sure no one would see me sneak out of the garage. No one did. Then, as quickly and silently as I could, I stepped out of the garage and closed and locked the door. Then I sneaked over to the back door of Benton's house and took my lock pick set out of my pocket and picked the back door of Benton's place and went into his place and closed and locked the door and put my lock pick set back into my pocket. So far, so good.

I was sneaking out of Benton's place now. I had searched it and bugged it and tapped Benton's landline phone. Now I reached my car and got into it, and then I took out of my pocket the radio to the bug I had put inside Benton's house, and the radio to the tap I had put inside Benton's landline phone, and put them on the front seat of my car and turned them on and listened to them.

Although there was nothing going on inside Benton's place right now. But, of course, that wouldn't mean that nothing was going to go on inside Benton's place later. I also looked in both directions of the street to see when Benton was going to show up. I didn't know where he worked so I could go over to that place and put that place under surveillance and follow Benton after I see his leaving that place and take it from there on what to do in the investigation. I only knew that Benton was a free lance construction foreman. And because of this, he must have worked for more than one construction company. And because of this, he must be at one of the construction companies right now working. If there were any construction work being done right now. Or, if there weren't any construction work being done right now, then he must be somewhere else right now, doing something else right now.

And I didn't know what kind of car Benton drove, either. Which was another

reason why I was going to have to wait here at his place for him to show up and improvise on what to do in investigating Benton.

And I was going to have to tap Benton's cell phone, too, if he has one. I hadn't been able to do that yet. But maybe I'll be able to do that later in the course of my investigating Benton.

I also took my digital recorder out of my pocket and recorded what I had discovered at Benton's place that could tell me what Vicki wanted to know: nothing. There *was* nothing inside Benton's place that could tell me what Vicki wanted to know. Which meant that maybe there was something there at Benton's place that had to do with Kent's death, and it was hidden there, either behind something, or out in the open, or that something was somewhere else and not at Benton's place. Then I put my digital recorder back into my pocket.

I saw a car appear and get bigger and bigger with each passing second. It was a navy blue Chevy with a black hard top. Then I saw the car make the turn and drive into Benton's driveway. Then I saw the head and bust of the driver. It was Benton. I looked at my watch. Ten thirty-nine.

I wondered why Benton came back to his place this early in the morning. Maybe he had a short day at work. If there *were* work today. Or maybe his coming back here to his place this early in the morning had to do with Kent's death. Or maybe his coming back here to his place this early had to do with something else. But whatever the reason was, I was going to need to find it out. But first I was going to need to search Benton's car. Then I saw Benton drive all the way up to the garage and bring his car to a complete stop in front of the garage. Then I saw Benton get out of the car and open the garage door. He was tall, slim, pale, had black hair, a pug nose, a thick musculature,

and he was wearing a brown polo shirt and olive green pants and black tennis shoes. Then I saw Benton get back into his car and drive into the garage, and then I saw Benton park the car inside the garage and get out of the car and lock it, and then I saw Benton walk out of his garage and close the garage door and go into his house. Now I had opportunity to search Benton's car. So I got out of *my* car and sneaked back into Benton's backyard and entered Benton's garage the same way I had entered it before. So far, so good. Then I put my lock pick set back into my pocket and noticed it was dark inside Benton's garage again. Then I took my penlight out of my pocket and turned it on and shot the light out in front of me. Then, I saw Benton's car and searched it and put a combination bug and homing device underneath the dashboard of Benton's car. Then I turned the penlight off and put it back into my pocket and sneaked out of Benton's garage the same way I had sneaked

into it, and then I went over to the back of Benton's house and peeked through one of the windows to see what Benton was doing. I didn't see him. Then, I went over to the back door of Benton's house and turned the knob to see if the door were locked. It wasn't. Then, as quickly and silently as I could, I opened the door and stepped into the house. I didn't see Benton inside the room I was in now.

The room I was standing in now was the kitchen. It was rectangular and spacious and white with a white linoleum floor and refrigerator and stove and microwave oven and sink and countertop and cupboards surrounding the kitchen. All of them white. And in the center of the room were a table and chairs. All of them white. Then, I tip toed through this room.

I came to the hall and stopped at it and peeked over it. It was long and green with a green rug and a closet. I saw no one inside it.

Then, I tip toed into the hall and tip toed down in.

When I came to Benton's room, I noticed the door to his room was closed. I put my ear to it. I heard breathing. Maybe Benton was sleeping. If so, that would give me the opportunity I needed. To get inside his room and render him unconscious and find and tap his cell phone and find out why he came back here to his place at ten thirty-nine this morning. So I opened the door just a crack, and then I peeked through the crack. Then, I saw Benton in bed. He *was* sleeping. Quickly but silently I took the knock out drops out of my pocket, and then, I pulled the door back and tip toed in Benton's room, and then, I put the knock out drops underneath the nostrils of Benton's nose, and then, it happened: Benton sniffed the fumes of the knock out drops, and then he passed out. Now he was out cold. And he was going to be out cold for hours. More than enough time for me to find and tap Benton's cell

phone and find out why Benton had come back here to his place at ten thirty-nine this morning. I put the knock out drops back into my pocket and looked for Benton's cell phone.

Benton's room was small but spacious, and it was chocolate brown with a chocolate brown carpet, and with a closet with sliding wooden doors, and a maple dresser.

I found Benton's cell phone. It was on his dresser. I tapped the phone. Then I looked around the room for Benton's alarm clock. It was time now for me to find out why Benton had come back here to his place at ten thirty-nine this morning. Although I had just found out he was taking a nap right now. If he had set his alarm clock for a time he wanted to get up at after he takes his nap, then that would mean that he was going to do something after he takes his nap. Something that would have to do with Kent's death. Or something that would have to do with his construction job. Or

something that had to do with something else. But whatever he was going to do after he takes his nap, he was going to find out that he had slept through the alarm when the alarm clock buzzed. But he might still be able to do what he wants to do after he takes his nap. If so, and then maybe at that time, I'll find out what he was supposed to do after he takes his nap. It would be risky. Since it would upset my investigation. But it was a risk I was going to have to take.

I found Benton's alarm clock. It was on one of the caramel colored bedside tables. It was a small cream white electric alarm clock. It was set to buzz one hour from now. So I took a bug out of my pocket and put it underneath the top of the table the clock was on, and then I took out of my pocket the radio to the bug and an earphone. Then I plugged the earphone into the earphone jack of the radio, and then I turned on the radio, and then I put the earpiece of the earphone in my ear, and then I put the radio back into

my pocket. If Benton were going to sleep through the alarm clock buzzing, then that would mean that the alarm clock was going to buzz for a long time. And I wasn't going to let people around me hear it if I were going to be around people at the time the alarm clock buzzes. Then I started listening in on Benton's bedroom, even though nothing was going on inside it right now, but, of course, that didn't mean that nothing was going to go on inside his bedroom later, and left Benton's room and sneaked out of Benton's house to go back to my car. I was done here. Not only that, there was no other reason for me to be here. I couldn't hang around here any longer than I was supposed to. It'd be dangerous if I would. I could get caught or killed or seen. And I couldn't have that.

When I reached my car, I got into it and took out of my pocket radio to the tap I had put inside Benton's cell phone, and the radio to the combination bug and homing device I

had put inside Benton's car, and put them on the front seat of my car and turned them on and listened to them. Although I didn't hear any conversations on Benton's cell phone or hear anything going on inside or at Benton's car right now. But, of course, that didn't mean I won't hear any conversations on Benton's cell phone or hear anything going on inside or at Benton's car later. I also took my digital recorder out of my pocket and recorded what I had discovered inside Benton's car: nothing. There was nothing inside it that could tell me what Vicki wanted to know. Either something was there inside Benton's car, either hidden behind something, or it was hidden out in the open, or, that something was somewhere else and not inside Benton's car. Then I turned my digital recorder off and put it back into my pocket, and then I started up my car and left Benton's place. I was done here. Not only that, I couldn't hang around at Benton's

place anymore than I was supposed to. It'd be dangerous if I would.

I was looking around for a good place to eat at now. I was getting hungry. I also thought about Benton's job and Norton's job. Benton was a free lance construction foreman. And Norton was the assistant manager of a place that made, repaired, sold, and delivered tools and machines. The two of them must be working on something that required their experiences in their jobs to work on. Something that they didn't want anyone to know about--something secret. And maybe this something secret that they were working on had something to do with Kent's death. And if it had something to do with Kent's death, then that would mean that Kent must have found out about this something, and Benton and Norton had found out that Kent had found out about this something and needed to keep Kent from telling anyone about this something and keep Kent from looking any further into

their secret. That would explain Norton's killing Kent.

Bob's Burger and Brew was on Woburn Street. Inside Barkley Village. I had eaten there before. It was a nice place to eat at.

I was here at Bob's Burger and Brew now. Sitting at a booth and eating a nice juicy cheeseburger.

I felt better after I had eaten. Now I looked at my watch. Eleven fifty-seven.

Since I had just eaten, I wasn't going to be able to start off the strategy I had planned for attacking the case right now. Because of this, I was going to have to wait until I get hungry again, then start off the strategy. But what I could do right now was go back to the office and check the mail and the answering machine and continue listening in Benton's place and his car, and Norton's place. So I left a nice tip on the table and paid the check and left Bob's Burger and Brew and went back to the office.

When I got here to the office, I put on the desk the radio to the bug I had put inside Benton's place and turned it on and listened to it, and the radio to the tap I had put inside Benton's landline phone and turned it on and listened to it, and the radio to the combination bug and homing device I had put inside Benton's car and turned it on and listened to it, and the radio to the tap I had put inside Benton's cell phone and turned it on and listened to it, and the bug I had put inside Benton's bedroom and turned it on and listened to it, and the radio to the bug I had put inside Norton's place and turned it on and listened to it, and the radio to the tap I had put inside Norton's landline phone and turned it on and listened to it, and my tape recorder, and checked the mail and the answering machine.

There wasn't anything in the mail, so I threw it into the wastebasket. No messages on the answering machine. Then I sat down

behind my desk and continued listening to all of the radios I had put on the desk.

An hour later, I heard the alarm clock in Benton's room buzz. But I didn't hear Benton himself waking up and turning the alarm clock off. Which meant that he hadn't heard the alarm clock buzz. He was still under the influence of the knock out drops. And he was going to be under the influence of the knock out drops for a long time. Although I continued listening to what was going on inside Benton's room. I was going to have to.

An hour later, I still heard the alarm clock buzzing. Although this time it wasn't buzzing as loud as it had been. And between the first time I had heard the alarm clock buzz and now, Benton hadn't woken up and turned the alarm clock off. Which meant that Benton still hadn't heard the alarm clock buzz. Which meant that he was still under the influence of the knock out drops.

A few minutes later, the alarm clock stopped buzzing. It was quiet inside Benton's room now. I didn't even hear Benton himself moving around. Which meant that he was still under the influence of the knock out drops. I continued listening in on Benton's room.

Because of my wanting to know what Benton was going to do after he comes to and discovers he had slept through the alarm clock buzzing, I decided to start attacking the case the way I had planned after I find out what Benton is going to do after he comes to and notices he slept through the alarm clock buzzing. It could be important.

Five hours later, I heard Benton moving around. I looked at my watch. Six o'clock. Exactly. Then, I turned my digital recorder on and recorded the time. Then, I put my digital recorder back on the desk, leaving the recorder on so I can record what it was that Benton was doing. Then, I heard Benton say:

"Great. I must have slept through it. It's six o'clock now. My show was supposed to start at Twelve this afternoon. I should have programmed the DVR to record the show, then take my nap. Oh, well. Next time." Then, I heard Benton get out of bed and move around inside his room. Then, I heard his leaving the room and going into another room. Then, I heard on the other radio to the bug I had put inside Benton's place Benton's going into another room and turn the TV on. Which meant that he was probably going to watch TV.

All through the night, I heard Benton watching TV. Then, I heard him turn the TV off and go into his room and get into bed. Then, I heard him sleeping. Then, I looked at my watch. Eleven clock. Exactly. Then, I recorded what time Benton had gone to bed. Then I turned the digital recorder off and realized *I'd* better go home and get some sleep, too. I was getting sleepy. So I put my digital recorder and all of the radios into my

pocket, and then I stepped out of the office and locked it and got into my car and went home. Tomorrow I could go back to the office and write the report on what I had heard Benton do after he had gone back to his place and start attacking the case the way I had planned. There wasn't anything else about the case that I could do tonight. So I might as well go home and get some sleep while I had the chance to go home and get some sleep.

CHAPTER VII

The next day, I was here at my office. Writing the report on what I had heard Benton do after he had gone back to his place. It may have been a waste of time, but I had to do it. For the sake of keeping a record of what was going on.

After I wrote the report, I turned on the printer and printed out the report and put the report into the file on the Kent incident case, and then I turned the computer and the printer off and thought about what I had heard Benton do after he had gone back to his place yesterday.

It was obviously nothing important that he had done yesterday. And it had nothing to do with Kent's death, and it didn't have anything to do with his construction job.

Yesterday he must have come home from work early and had needed to take a nap, and then see this show of his that he had wanted to see, or, yesterday, he may have gone home from doing something else that had nothing to do with Kent's death and needed to take a nap and then see this show of his that he had wanted to see. This morning when I had gotten ready to go to the office and write the report on what I had heard Benton do at his place after he had gone back to his place, I had continued listening in on Benton's place. But all I had heard him do at that time was move around inside his place, and then I heard his leaving his place. Which meant that he must be going to work, or, he was going to go do something else that had nothing or something to do with Kent's death. I looked at my watch. Nine thirty-six.

It was a good thing that I had come here to my office early this morning and had written the report on what I had heard

Benton do after he had gone back to his place. There was no telling how long it would take to write it. But I was pleased to find out it hadn't taken me long to write it. Now I had time today to starting attacking the case the way I had planned. But I didn't have to start attacking the case the way I had planned right now. I still had time today to start attacking the case the way I had planned. So I put the file on the Kent incident case into the filing cabinet and locked up the cabinet, and then I sat back down behind my desk and unlocked the top drawer of my desk and took the remote control out of the drawer and turned on the TV with the remote control and watched TV to pass the time until it was time for me to start attacking the case the way I had planned and kept track of time.

It was time for me to start attacking the case the way I had planned now. So I turned the TV off with the remote control and put the remote control back into the top drawer

of my desk, and then I locked the drawer, and then I stepped out of my office and closed and locked the door and got into my car and drove over to Tools and Machines, Inc.

Tools and Machines, Inc. was on Woburn Street. It was a vast complex of buildings that housed the operations of Tools and Machines, Inc.

I parked my car here across the street from the plant and watched the plant and kept track of time.

Then, I saw people walking out of one of the buildings of the plant. Quickly I looked at my watch and took my binoculars out of the glove compartment and looked through them at who was walking out of that building. One of them was Norton. He was tall, robust, had sandy hair, a matching mustache splitting his birdlike face in two, a thick build, and he was wearing a brown suit, a light yellow shirt, no tie, open collar, and black leather shoes. I saw him go into

the parking lot and get into his dark brown Corolla and drive out of the parking lot and turn onto the road and drive down the road. / started up *my* car and pulled away from the curb and followed him.

As I followed him, I was able to see and record the license plate number of his car and did.

I saw him go over to El Albinil, a wonderful Mexican restaurant here on Samish Way. I had eaten here before. It was a nice place to eat at. Then I saw him park his car inside the parking lot of El Albinil and get out of his car and lock it and go into El Albinil, and / went into the parking lot of El Albinil and parked *my* car in the parking lot and got out of my car and locked it, and then / went into El Albinil.

I saw Norton sitting at the counter. I went over to the counter and sat next to him. I glanced at him and saw him sipping coffee and looking at a menu. Then / ordered coffee and a menu, and after they

came, I sipped the coffee and looked at the menu.

A woman came around and took Norton's order and mine and took the menus.

"Say," I said to Norton. "Aren't you Hank Norton, the assistant manager of Tools and Machines, Inc.?"

"Yes, I am," he said, smiling. His eyes were brown.

"My name is Frank Hurley. I saw you on the news. It had to do with your boss, Merv Kent. You went into his office to see him about something, and then you saw him slumped over his desk, and you also saw blood on his desk. And you also saw Glenn Mannering, the acting manager of Tools and Machines, Inc., take Mr. Kent's cash box out of his desk and try to escape. And you stopped him from doing it and called the police. Then the police came and took Mannering away."

"That's right," Norton admitted.

"And then one day Mannering was bailed out of jail and killed before his case went to trial. And after that the bail bondsman who bailed Mannering out of jail was killed and his briefcase was stolen."

"That's right."

"Well, I'm sorry to bring all of this up, but what I find interesting about all of this is that Mannering was killed a few days after he was bailed out of jail, and the bail bondsman who bailed Mannering out of jail was killed a few days after Mannering was killed. One occurrence happened shortly after the last one. And because of this, I think both occurrences are connected. There had to be a reason for why Mannering was bailed out of jail and killed before his trial started, and for why the bail bondsman was killed after Mannering was bailed out of jail and killed before his trial started. You'll have to forgive me for acting this way, Mr. Norton. I'm a private investigator." Then I

took my private investigator's license out of my pocket and showed it to Norton.

"I see," Norton said when he looked at my private investigator's license.

Then I put my private investigator's license back into my pocket.

"Well, I can understand that," Norton continued. "But has it occurred to you that even though one of these occurrences happened shortly after the last one that both of these occurrences may not be connected? That it was coincidental that one of the occurrences happened shortly after the last one? That one of the occurrences had nothing to do with the other one?"

"Yes. I thought of that. As a matter of fact, I had to. I couldn't overlook it. But all I've got right now are theories about what happened. I have no facts about what happened."

"I see."

"And there's something I heard about: before the police came and took Mannering

away for stealing that cash box, someone came out of the bathroom and heard the door to Merv Kent's office being locked. He didn't think anything of it, and then he went back to work. But when he heard and saw the police come and take Mannering away for stealing that cash box, he wondered about the door to Merv Kent's office being locked. Then he told the police about it. They investigated this, but they didn't find anything inside Merv Kent's office that said something happened before the police came and took Mannering away for stealing the cash box. But the person who heard the door to Kent's office being locked thinks that what he heard may have to do with his hearing and seeing the police come and take Mannering away for the stealing that cash box."

"You mean he thinks that something inside Merv's office happened that might have to do with the police coming and

taking Glenn away for stealing that cash box?"

"That's right."

"Well, what does he think happened inside Merv's office that might have to do with the police coming and taking Glenn away for stealing that cash box?"

"I don't know. But whatever it was that happened inside Merv Kent's office at the time the person came out of the bathroom and heard the door to Merv Kent's office being locked, Merv Kent, who may have been in his office at the time the person came out of the bathroom and heard the door to his office being locked, or someone else who was in Merv Kent's office at the time the person came out of the bathroom and heard the door to Merv Kent's office being locked, or both, didn't want anyone to see what happened inside Merv Kent's office at that time."

"I see. What do *you* think happened?"

"The same. There is that possibility."

Norton thought about it. Then he spoke: "Yeah. There is that possibility. But if you heard about what happened to Merv Kent, then you also know that the investigation of his death is over. The case is closed."

"Yes, I know. But I can't help being curious about what happened and have the theories about what happened. After all, I did say that I am a private detective."

"Yes, you did. Well, I hope you find out what you'd like to know."

"I hope so, too."

Norton and I were eating our lunches now. Norton was having a beef enchilada and rice and beans, and washing it down with more coffee, and *I* was having a chicken enchilada and a tamale and a taco and rice and beans and washing *that* down with more coffee.

Neither Norton nor I continued talking about Kent's death while we ate. Instead, we talked about other things.

Norton finished eating before I did, and then he asked for his check and got it and left a nice tip on the counter and paid the check and left. I saw him walk out of the restaurant. Then I took out of my pocket the radio to the tap I had put inside Benton's cell phone, and the earphone I had already connected to it. Then I turned on the radio and put it back into my pocket, and then I put the earpiece of the earphone into my ear, and then I took my digital recorder out of my pocket and put it on the counter. Then I listened in on Benton's cell phone. Then, I heard something. It was ringing. I looked at my watch and turned on the digital recorder and recorded the time I heard the ringing. Then I continued listening. Then, I heard Benton answer the phone: "Hello?" he said.

"Hello," Norton said. "Dirk?"

"Yeah, this is Dirk."

"This is Hank, Dirk."

"Hank. How are ya?"

"Fine. You?"

"Fine."

Then Norton told Benton about the conversation that he had just had with me about Kent's death.

"I see," Benton said after Norton had finished.

"He could find out what we're doing," Norton continued.

"Well, let's hope he doesn't,"

"Yeah. What are you doing right now?"

"Nothing. Why?"

"Find out what you can about this Frank Hurley. I'd do it myself, but I gotta get back to work. Then get back to me and tell me what you found out about him."

"I'll do that."

"And after we find out what we need to know about him, we'll decide what to do about him and do it."

"Of course. Anything else, Hank?"

"No, that's it. Talk to you later, Dirk."

"Yeah," Then Dirk hung up.

So did Norton.

And I turned my digital recorder off and put it back into my pocket and finished eating and finished my coffee and left a nice tip on the counter and asked for *my* check and got it and paid it and left El Albin and got back into my car and went back to the office to continue the investigation from there.

I was here at my office now. Sitting behind my desk and continued listening in on Benton's cell phone. I also thought about the conversation I had had with Norton about Kent's death when I had met him at El Albinil.

There were some things that Norton had done when he and I had talked about Kent's death; he hadn't asked me who it was that had heard the door to Kent's office being locked when that person had left the bathroom and had gone back to work. Which probably meant that if Norton wanted to know who that person was, he'd

tip his hand. And that could make him suspect.

Another thing that he hadn't done when he and I had talked about Kent's death was get upset about talking about Kent's death. That meant he wouldn't want to talk about it. And then he and I wouldn't have talked about it.

And another thing that he had done when we had talked about Kent's death was tell me *his* theories about Kent's death when I had told him *my* theories about Kent's death. Well, that made sense: he wanted to see what *I* knew about the case.

And another thing he did was not be upset about our talking about Kent's death when I had told him I was a private investigator. My being a private investigator didn't seem to bother him. Maybe it didn't. Or maybe it did, but he didn't want to look like he was bothered by my being a private investigator looking into Kent's death.

And when I had offered Norton my condolences about Kent's death and Mannering's death, he thanked me for it.

So what it boiled down to was this: he wasn't bothered about talking to me about Kent's death and Mannering's death at all. He acted like he was taking Kent's death very well. He also acted like the case of Kent's death was over.

I heard some dialing on Benton's phone. Then, I heard some ringing. I looked at my watch and turned on the digital recorder and recorded the time I heard this ringing, and then I continued listening. Then, I heard the person on the other end of the phone pick up. "Hello?" it was Norton.

"Hello. Hank?" Benton said. "It's Dirk."

I looked at the board on the radio to the tap I had put inside Benton's cell phone and saw the number he had dialed. Quickly I wrote it down on the pad on my desk and continued listening in on Benton's cell phone.

"Dirk," Norton said. "How are ya?"

"Fine. You?"

"Fine."

"I found out what I could about Frank Hurley. He *is* a private investigator, and he looks into anything secret or illegal, and he lives here in Bellingham."

"So he looks into anything secret or illegal, huh? Well, let's hope he doesn't find out about *our* secret."

"Yeah. What do you want to do with him?"

"Follow him and watch him. If we find out that he doesn't discover our secret, then we leave him alone. We even stop following him and watching him. But if we find out that he *does* discover our secret, then we'll just have to keep him from looking any further into what we're doing and to keep him from telling anyone what we're doing."

CHAPTER VIII

Norton and Benton hung up after they had finished talking. And I turned the digital recorder off and got out my reverse phone directory and looked up the phone number that Benton had dialed and I had written down on the pad on my desk. It belonged to Norton. It was his cell phone number. I wrote HANK NORTON'S CELL PHONE NUMBER on the pad on my desk, and above the phone number itself, and then I stood up and unlocked the filing cabinet and took out of the cabinet the file on the Kent incident case and put it on the desk. Then I sat back down behind my desk and tore off of the pad on my desk the paper I had written Norton's cell phone number on, and then I paper clipped the number to the inside of the folder of the file on the Kent incident case,

and then I got on the computer and wrote a summary of the conversation that Norton and I had had about Kent's death when we had met at El Albinil, and about the phone conversation that Norton and Benton had had about the conversation that Norton and I had had about Kent's death after I had gotten back here to my office and listened in on their phone conversation. Then I turned the printer on and printed out the summary, and then I put the summary into the file on the Kent incident case, and then I turned off the computer and the printer and thought about the conversation that Norton and I had had about Kent's death, and about the phone conversation that Norton and Benton had had about the conversation that Norton and I had had about Kent's death.

Norton and Benton had said that they were going to keep me from looking any further into what they were doing and keep me from telling anyone what they were doing--if I discover their secret. Whatever

their secret was. Well, *if* they were going to do that, then that would mean that whatever it was that they were doing must be illegal as well as it must be secret. And Kent's death must prove that whatever it was they were doing must be illegal, too, if his death had something to do with whatever it was they were doing. My guess was that Kent's death had something to do with what they were doing. And they had found out that Kent had found out about what they were doing and Norton stopped him from looking any further into what they were doing, and to keep him from telling anyone what they were doing. That would explain Kent and Norton being inside Kent's office, and Kent's body and blood being on his desk, and Norton standing at his desk with a knife in his hand.

And then there was something else they said they were going to do to find out if I will or won't find out about their secret: follow and watch me. Because of this, I was going

to have to keep them from following and watching while I continue my investigation, and until I want them to follow and watch me. So I took out of my pocket the disguise of a man with blond hair and a matching mustache and a stern face and looked at it. Then I took my wallet out of my pocket, and then I took out of my wallet one of my driver's license that had the name and picture of the man with the blond hair and stern face on it and looked at it. I had the feeling I was going to have to use these things to help me keep them from finding me so they can't follow and watch me. Then I put the disguise back in my pocket, and then I put the driver's license with the name and picture of the blond with the stern face back into my wallet, and then I put my wallet back into my pocket, and then I collected the file on the Kent incident case and got up and put the file in the filing cabinet, and then I locked up the cabinet, and then I collected the radio to the tap I

had put inside Benton's cell phone and put it into my pocket, and then I withdrew my briefcase from inside the knee hole of my desk. I always kept my briefcase inside the knee hole of my desk. And then I stepped out of the office and locked it, and then I went over to my car and put the briefcase in the back seat of my car, and then I got into the front seat of my car and started up the car, and then I left office and took indirect routes over to Sehome Village. I don't think that Norton or Benton or anyone else working with them on their secret were following and watching me right now, but, just in case.

When I got here to Sehome Village, I parked my car in the parking lot of the shopping center, and then I took my briefcase out of the car and locked the car, and then I took my briefcase with me and went into the grocery store and went into the bathroom, and then I noticed no one else was here inside the bathroom. Then I saw the cubicle the toilet was in and noticed

no one was inside the cubicle, so I went into the cubicle and closed the door, and then I took my disguise of the blond with the stern face out of my pocket and put it on, and then I left the cubicle and walked out of the bathroom and left the store, and then I crossed the street and got on the bus and went to the nearest car rental agency and ordered a car, using the name of the blond with the stern face that was on the other driver's license instead of using my own name to order the car. I didn't want to use my own name to order the car. It'd be dangerous if I would. Norton or Benton or any of the other people working with Norton and Benton on their secret could trace me to the car I rented if they found out I wasn't using my own car and if they had to find me. Then I drove over to the nearest department store and bought some clothes and a suitcase, and then I went over the nearest hotel or motel and checked into it, using a different name instead of my own name

when I registered. If Norton or Benton or any of the people working with them on their secret were going to look for me, but couldn't find me at home or at my office, they'd look for me in hotels and motels. I didn't want this to happen. Now I was going to be able to work out of the motel I had just checked into and drive around in a different car I was renting until I can use my own name again and work out of my office or my place again, and until I can drive around in *my* car again.

I was here inside my motel room now. Putting into the drawers of the dresser the clothes I had bought. Since I didn't know how long I was going to be here. Then I looked at my watch. Twelve fifty-six.

I had more than enough time to get some sleep and get back into my disguise and get something to eat before I go over to Norton's place and render him unconscious and tap his cell phone after he goes to bed. I was going to need to tap his cell phone. And

after I do that, I was going to call it a night because there wasn't going to be anything else about the case I could do after I sneak into Norton's place and render him unconscious and tap his cell phone after he goes to bed. And then, tomorrow, I resume the investigation. So I set the alarm clock for a time I wanted to get up tonight, and then I put my gun underneath the pillow, and then I got undressed and got into bed and went to sleep.

The alarm clock buzzed. I stirred, then came awake. Then I looked at the time. The clock told me it was the time I wanted to get up at. Then I got out of bed and went into the bathroom and shaved and showered. Then I went back into the bedroom and got dressed and put my disguise of the blond with the stern face back on. Then I stepped out of my motel room and unlocked it, and then I got into my rented goldenrod Mercedes Benz and started it up, and then I

left the motel and looked around for a good place to eat at.

I found it: Shari's. I had eaten here before. It *was* a good place to eat at.

I was here inside Shari's now. Sitting at the counter and eating a hot roast beef sandwich and washing it down with coffee. Then I had apple pie for dessert. And washed *that* down with more coffee.

I felt better after I had eaten. Then I had some more coffee and kept track of time.

It was time for me to go, so I left a nice tip on the counter and paid the check and left Shari's and went over to Norton's place.

I was here at Norton's place now. Parked across the street from his place and watching it and keeping track of time.

I was time now for me to get into Norton's place and render Norton himself unconscious and tap his cell phone after he goes to bed. I saw a light in the living room being extinguished. Which meant Norton must be going to bed. Quickly I took my

gloves out of my pocket and put them on, and then I got out of my car and ran across the street and got into the back of Norton's place. Then, I looked at the back of Norton's place. I saw light on inside a room. This room that the light must be on it must be Norton's room. He must be getting ready to go to bed. I waited for the light in the room to be extinguished while I continued watching the back of Norton's place. Then, I saw the light in the room being extinguished. Then I ran over to the window of the room and listened. I heard something going on inside the room. Maybe it was Norton getting into bed. Or, maybe it was something else. Then I didn't hear anything after that. Then, I heard something else: breathing. That probably meant that Norton was sleeping right now. Quickly I took the knock out drops out of my pocket, and then, as quickly and silently as I could, I opened the door to the room that Norton must be sleeping in just enough to peek inside. Then,

I saw Norton sleeping. He was facing me. Then, as quickly and silently as I could, I put the knock out drops underneath the nostrils of Norton's nose--and then it happened: Norton inhaled the knock out drops. Then he passed out. Now he was out cold. And he was going to be out cold for hours. Giving me more than enough time to find and tap Norton's cell phone. Quickly I put the knock out drops back into my pocket and stepped inside the room and closed the door. Then I took my penlight out of my pocket and turned it on, and then I shot the light of the penlight out in front of me and looked around the room for Norton's cell phone.

I found it. It was on his dresser. Quickly I walked over to it and tapped it. Then I turned the penlight off and put it back into my pocket, and then I sneaked out of Norton's room and looked for and found the living room of Norton's place and opened the front door of Norton's place just enough to peek out of it and see if the coast were

clear. It was. Then, as quickly and silently as I could, I stepped out of Norton's place and closed the door, and then I ran back to my car and got into it and started it up, and then I drove away from Norton's place without speeding so I won't be noticed. Then I looked around for a good place to eat at. I was getting hungry.

I found it: Denny's. A wonderful twenty four hour restaurant. I had eaten there before. It was a nice place to eat at.

I was here at Denny's now. Sitting at the counter and eating a cheeseburger and washing it down with coffee.

I felt better after I had eaten. Then I left a nice tip on the counter and paid the check and left Denny's and got into my car and started it up, and then I drove away from the restaurant and went over to the nearest store and bought some food, and then I got back into my car and left the store and went back to the motel.

I was here inside my motel room now. I put the food I had bought at the store inside the refrigerator, and then I put my briefcase on the table, and then I got out of my disguise and got undressed and took a shower, and then I set the alarm clock for the time I wanted to get up at tomorrow morning, and then I put my gun underneath the pillow, and then I turned off the light and got into bed and went to sleep. There wasn't anything else about the case I could do until tomorrow. Not only that, I was getting sleepy. So I might as well sleep while I had the chance to sleep.

CHAPTER IX

The next day, I was here inside my motel room and watching TV and sipping coffee and listening to the radios. I needed to wake up before I have breakfast. Not only that, I thought I'd listen to the radios while I wake up. Then, I heard some dialing on Norton's landline phone. Quickly I looked at my watch and turned the digital recorder on and continued listening. Then, I heard some ringing on Norton's landline phone.

"Hello," it was Benton.

"Hello. Dirk?" Norton said.

"Speaking."

"Dirk, it's Hank."

"Hank, How are ya?"

"Fine. You?"

"Fine."

"What's the story on Frank Hurley? Have you found him and followed him and watched him?"

"We *have* tried to find him to follow him and watch him. But we can't find him. We looked for him at his office. He's not there. We also looked for him at his place. He's not there, either. But we're still looking."

"Well, maybe he went out of town for some reason."

"Well, if he did, then that would mean that whatever the reason was he had for going out of town must be important."

"Yeah. And it's so important that he had to stop looking into Merv's death and take care of it."

"Yeah. There is that possibility."

"You still want us to continue looking for Hurley and follow him and watch him?"

"Yeah. I think it'll be a waste of time, though, since the case of Merv's death is closed, but, just in case. And while some of the boys are looking for Hurley to follow him

and watch him, the rest of us can continue our project. It looks like we can do that. The cops aren't following *me* anymore."

"Well, that's good."

"Yes, it is."

"Why don't we continue the project this weekend? The plant will be closed this weekend. As you know, it's always closed on the weekend."

"Yeah, I know. And I'm not working this weekend. All right. Let's do work on the project this weekend."

"All right. We meet at the place this Friday night at seven, then go to work."

"All right. This Friday night at seven."

"Great."

"I'll drive over to the place and make sure everything's there. As a matter of fact, I can and will do that today. And I'll do that every day until Friday, too."

"Good idea."

"O.K. See ya Friday."

"Yeah. See ya Friday."

Then Norton and Benton hung up. After that, I recorded when the phone conversation ended, and then I turned the digital recorder off. Then I looked at my watch. Eight o-one.

It looked like I was going to have to have breakfast on the go. Because of what I had just heard Benton say he was going to do before he and Norton resume whatever their project was, I was going to have to get started on finding and following and watching Benton so I can find out what his and Norton's project was and where it was. Maybe it would have to do with Kent's death. Or maybe it had to do with something else. So I got dressed and put on my disguise and withdrew the bag of groceries from the refrigerator, and then I turned off the TV and collected all of the radios and my digital recorder and put them into my pocket, and then I collected my briefcase, and then I stepped out of my motel room and closed and locked the door,

and then I unlocked the back seat of my car and put my briefcase into the back seat of the car, and then I closed the door to the back seat of the car, and then I got into the front seat of my car and took a tuna fish sandwich out of the bag of groceries and starting eating the sandwich and took all of my radios and my digital recorder out of my pocket and put them on the front seat of my car and listened to the radios. I also watched the radio to the combination bug and homing device I had put inside Benton's car. But so far, there was no signal. The light on the radio would flash, indicating that there *was* a signal. Then I started up the car and left the motel and continued eating the sandwich and listening to all of the radios and glanced at the radio to the combination bug and homing device I had put inside Benton's car. But so far, there was no signal.

I went into different directions and glanced at the radio to the combination bug and homing device I had put inside Benton's

car. But so far, there was no signal. Then, when I went in a new different direction, I saw the light on the radio. It was flashing. Then, I drove further down the street and glanced at the radio again. The light on the radio continued flashing. I drove further down the street and glanced at the radio again. This time, the light on the radio was flashing rapidly. Which meant that the signal was getting stronger. I was finding Benton. I continued driving down this street and continued glancing at the radio. The signal was getting stronger and stronger. I was getting closer and closer to finding Benton.

I found Benton. He was driving down Samish Way. Going south. Then I saw him go into a wooded area. I drove into the wooded area, too. Then I saw him make a turn and drive down a road, and then I glanced at what he was doing as I drove by him. I saw him driving down a driveway and up to a house. The house wasn't very big.

Two stories high. And it was rectangular and boarded up. I looked at my watch and drove by the place and parked my car on the other side of the road a few yards away from the house, and then I looked into the side view mirror of my car to see what Benton was doing. This was all I could do until Benton leaves the place. Then I could go over to the place and search it. Then I picked up my digital recorder and recorded the time I had seen Benton go to that boarded up house. Then I turned the digital recorder off and put it back on the front seat of the car and resumed watching what Benton was doing and kept track of time.

A few minutes later, I saw Benton leave the boarded up house and turn onto the road and go back in the same direction he had come from. I looked at my watch. Then I picked up my digital recorder and recorded the time I had seen Benton leave the boarded up house, and then I turned the digital recorder off and put it back on the

front seat of my car, and then I started up my car and turned around and drove back to the boarded up house and made the turn and drove down the driveway that lead up to the boarded house.

I drove around to the back of the house and parked my car here. Then I put my digital recorder into my pocket, and then I got out of the car and locked the door, and then I opened the door to the back seat of the car and withdrew my briefcase from the back seat of my car, and then I put the briefcase on the hood of my car, and then I opened up the briefcase and took another bug and its radio out of the briefcase and put them into my pocket, and then I closed the briefcase and put it back into the back seat of the car, and then I closed and the door to the back seat of the car, and then I took my leather gloves out of my pocket and put them on, but before I went over to the back door of the house to pick the lock of the back door of the house, I noticed that there

was a hasp and a padlock on the door. That must have made sense: after Benton and Norton and the other people working with Benton and Norton on their project discovered this place, they broke the lock and hasp on the back door of this place to get into the place. Then they had put a hasp and a pad lock of their own on the door to keep people from getting into it. They couldn't ask a locksmith to make a key to open the back door to the house. The locksmith would want to know why they wanted to have a key made for them to open up the back door of the house and not have a key or keys made to open up the other doors of the place.

In other words, they wanted to make the house look like it was still boarded up.

I went over to the back door of the house and got out my lock pick set, and then I picked the padlock, and then I put the padlock in my pocket, and then I went into the house and closed the door behind me

and put my lock pick set back into my pocket. Then I noticed it was dark inside. So I took my penlight out of my pocket and turned the light on and shot the light out in front of me. I saw a long, wide room in front of me. Inside this room were tables and stools surrounding the tables. There wasn't anything on the tables. I took my digital recorder out of my pocket and recorded my seeing the tables and stools inside this room and what was on the tables. Then I also saw cabinets inside this room. They were against the walls. There were hasps and padlocks on them. I went over to the cabinets and picked the locks. Then I looked inside the cabinets. I saw things on the shelves of these cabinets. Some of them were electric. Some of them weren't. I also saw blueprints on other shelves inside the cabinets. I unrolled one of them to take a look at them. These blueprints were of something called an electric dead bolt lock opener. A device to open a dead bolt lock electrically. I took my

camera out of my pocket and photographed the blueprints of this device to open a dead bolt lock electrically and recorded what I saw in these blueprints on my digital recorder. Then I rolled up the blueprints and put the blueprints back where I had found them. Then I unrolled the rest of the blueprints and looked at them and photographed them and recorded what I saw on my digital recorder. The blueprints I was looking at now were of a signaturing device: a device that would make it able for someone to operate an electric item and not someone else. I photographed and recorded the blueprints, and then I rolled up the blueprints and put them back where I had found them. Then I unrolled some other blueprints to look at them. These blueprints were of a device that electrically removed and restored power from a machine or a device. I photographed and recorded what I saw inside *these* blueprints, and then I unrolled and looked at more blueprints and

photographed and recorded what I saw in them. These blueprints were of illegal weapons including a machine gun. Then I looked at the blueprints and photographed them and recorded what I saw in them, and then I rolled up the blueprints and put them back where I had found them. Then I saw laptops and printers and cords inside the cabinets. I photographed the laptops and printers and cords and recorded my seeing the laptops and printers and cords, and then I put my camera and digital recorder back into my pocket, and then I closed and locked the doors to the cabinets. I was finished looking inside the cabinets. Then I saw generators here inside the same room of the house the tables and stools and cabinets were in. I took my camera out of my pocket and photographed the generators, and then I put my camera back into my pocket and took my digital recorder out of my pocket, and then I recorded my seeing the generators. Then I turned the digital

recorder off and put the recorder back into my pocket, and then I went upstairs to look around there.

There was nothing here upstairs. All of the rooms on *this* landing of the house were empty. Unused. Then I went downstairs and went over to the tables and stools and took the bug out of my pocket, and then I put the bug underneath one of the tables. Then I left the house the same way I had entered it. I had finished searching the house. Then I took the padlock out of my pocket and threaded it into the hasp and locked the padlock. Then I went back to my car and unlocked it, and then I got into the car and closed the door, and then I took out of my pocket the radio to the bug I had put underneath one of the tables inside the boarded up house and put it on the front seat of my car, and then I turned it on and listened to it. Although nothing was going on inside the boarded up house right now. But, of course, that didn't mean that nothing

was going to happen inside the boarded up house later. And then I started up my car and left the boarded up house.

I was driving back in the same direction I had come from. There was no reason for me to go in the other direction. I was also looking around for a good place to eat at. I was getting hungry.

I was here at that place now. Sitting at the counter and sipping coffee and waiting for the meal I had ordered to come. I also thought about my discovery of the boarded up house.

It was obvious that Norton and Benton and the other people working with Norton and Benton on whatever project that Norton and Benton were working on didn't own the boarded up house. If they did, the house wouldn't be boarded up. And there'd be electricity inside that house instead of their using generators.

And then there was what I had discovered in those cabinets: the tools and

machines and the blueprints and the laptops and the printers and the cords. It was obvious that Benton and Norton and the other people working with Benton and Norton on Benton's and Norton's project were making these kinds of tools and machines. That would explain the blueprints. And it would probably explain the laptops and printers, too. They must be using them to help them create the tools and the machines. It would be just as good as using paper and a pen. And no doubt they plug the laptops and printers into the generators when it comes time for them to use the laptops and printers. But what I was wondering about was this: why were they making these kinds of tools and machines? I was going to have to tell Vicki what I had discovered.

I was eating my meal now: a nice delicious chiliburger and fries, and I washed it down with a chocolate shake and more coffee.

I felt better after I had eaten. Then I left a nice tip on the counter, and then I paid the check and left the restaurant and got into my car and drove back in the same direction I had come from. I looked at my watch. Twelve thirty-six. I had more than enough time to go over to Vicki's place and meet her there and talk to her there while I was in disguise. And I was going to have to meet her and talk to her in disguise. Since Norton and Benton and the people working with Norton and Benton on Norton's and Benton's project thought I was out of town. I checked the groceries situation. I still had a lot of food and drink inside the bag of groceries I still had with me. I went over to Vicki's place to meet her there. I didn't feel like following Vicki from Tools and Machines, Inc. to her place or some other place. Norton could see me doing it. Although I was in disguise, and he thought I was out of town.

Vicki's place was on Garden Street. It was a nice one story brown house with a forest green roof and a matching garage.

I parked across the street from her place and watched the house and both sides of the street and kept track of time.

About four and a half hours later, I saw a canary yellow Stingray driving down the street. I saw who was driving the Stingray: Vicki. Then I saw her pull into the driveway of her place and drive all the way up to the garage, and then I saw bring her car to a complete stop in front of the garage, and then I saw her get out of her car and open the garage door. She was wearing a short sleeve cherry red blouse and blue pants and black tennis shoes. Then I saw her get back into her car and drive into the garage, and then I saw her park her car inside the garage, and then I saw her get out of her car and lock it, and then I saw her walk out of the garage and close the door. Then I saw her walk over to the side door of her place.

Quickly I got out of my car and locked it, and then I crossed the street and went over to the front door of Vicki's place and knocked on it.

A few seconds later, Vicki opened the door.

"Ms Weylon?" I said. "This is Frank Hurley. This is a disguise I'm wearing. That's why I don't look like the man you talked to in my office. May I come in? I need to talk to you. It's about the case. And I'll remove my disguise to let you know it's me you're talking to when I get inside. I can't take my disguise off out here."

"All right," Then Vicki moved sideways to let me in, and I came in, and then she closed the door.

"Thank you, Ms Weylon," I said to her. Then I removed my disguise.

"Why are you wearing a disguise, Mr. Hurley?" Vicki asked.

I told her.

"Oh, I see," Vicki said after I had finished.

Vicki and I were here inside Vicki's big, wide spacious blue-gray living room now. Sitting on the silver couch and sipping Coke. I told her what I had discovered inside the boarded up house and showed her pictures of what I had photographed that were in my camera.

"That material those things are made of looks like the same kind of material that is in our factory," Vicki said after I had finished showing her the photographs of the tools and machines I had seen inside the boarded up house.

"Really?" I asked.

"Yeah."

"Well, then if that material those things are made of looks like the same kind of material that's in your factory, then that would mean that that material has been smuggled out of your factory and into that boarded up house. No doubt by Norton. And

he probably smuggled that material out of your factory and into the boarded house gradually instead of all at once so the smuggling of the material won't be noticed."

"Well, then if Hank *is* smuggling the material out of the factory and into the boarded up house, and he and this Benton and these other people are making their tools and machines with this material, then what are they going to use these tools and machines for?"

"I don't know. But whatever reason they have for using these tools and machines, it must not be legal if it has to do with Merv Kent's death."

"Well, I think we should find out what that reason is for their using these kinds of tools and machines, and maybe we'll find out if that reason has to do with Merv's death."

"I've already taken care of that. I put a bug inside that boarded up house. And I heard Norton and Benton say when they're

going to continue working out at the boarded up house. And I told Vicki how I had found out when Norton and Benton and some of the people working with Norton and Benton on their project were going to continue doing their work out at the shack."

"I see," Vicki said after I had finished.

And then I told Vicki that the rest of those people were still looking for me. Even though they and the other people and Benton and Norton thought I was out of town.

"And because of this," Vicki asked me after I had finished. "you'll still have to wear your disguise while you continue the investigation."

"That's right," I said. "And I'll still have to drive around in the car I'm driving now, too. I'm not driving my own car right now."

"I see."

Then I told Vicki where I was staying, and why I was staying there.

"I see," she said after I had finished. "And because of this, we'll have to meet there or here at my place whenever we need to talk about the investigation?"

"That's right. And if you need to get a hold of me, you can get a hold of me at the motel." Then I told her what name I had used when I had registered at the motel. "Don't call me at home or the office since some of Norton and Benton are still looking for me."

"All right. And you can call me at my place instead of at work." Then Vicki walked over to the light brown table her cream white telephone was on and wrote down a phone number on the pad on the desk and tore the paper off of the pad and came back to me and gave me the paper. I looked at the phone number on the paper. Then I folded up the paper and took my wallet out of my pocket and put the paper into my wallet and put my wallet back into my pocket.

"One more thing," I then told Vicki. "To play it safe, everything that we've been talking about that has to do with Merv Kent's death ends right here."

"I understand. I won't tell anyone everything that we've been talking about that has to do with Merv Kent's death," Vicki promised.

"Good."

"Is there anything else, Mr. Hurley?"

"No," I said. "That's it. What about you?"

"No. I think that's it."

"All right. I'll get back to work now." Then I put my disguise back on and left Vicki's place and got back into my car and drove back to my motel. From my motel room, I was going to continue the investigation.

CHAPTER X

It was Wednesday morning now, and I was here inside my motel room. Between the last time I had talked to Vicki and now, I had stayed inside my motel room and listened to the radios and watched TV, but I hadn't heard anything on the radios. I had also gone to a movie and had eaten out. I knew I could do those things until Friday. And I had gotten more groceries. Now I continued listening to the radios while I watched TV and sipped coffee. Then, I heard some dialing on Norton's landline phone. Quickly I looked at my watch and turned on the digital recorder when I heard the dialing, and then I listened in on Norton's phone. Then, I heard some ringing.

"Hello," it was Benton.

"Hello. Dirk?" Norton said. "It's Hank."

"Hank. How are ya?"

"Fine. You?"

"Fine."

"How's it going on finding Hurley?"

"We still haven't found him. My guess is he's still out of town."

"Well, then if he is still out of town, then that would mean that whatever he's doing out of town must be taking time. Because of this, it's hard to say when he'll come back here to Bellingham. Because of that, you and the boys stop looking for him and rest up for a couple of days, and this Friday the boys can help us out on resuming our projects. If Hurley reappears, then the boys can follow him and watch him."

"I'll tell them."

"Good. See ya Friday, Dirk."

"Yeah."

Then Norton and Benton hung up. Then I looked at my watch and recorded when the phone conversation was over and turned my digital recorder off. Then I thought. So

Norton having Benton tell those guys to stop finding me was a point in my favor. They weren't going to look for me to follow me and watch me, but I was still going to have to wear my disguise and drive around in my rented car. I couldn't stop being in disguise and stop driving around in another car right now. I was going to have to stop being in disguise and stop driving around in another car if or when the time would come for me to stop being in disguise and drive around in another car. I continued listening to the radios.

It was Friday evening now. Between the time I heard Norton and Benton talking about some of those guys stop finding me to follow and watch me and now, I had continued listening in on the radios, but at those times, I hadn't heard anything on the radios. I had also gone out and had eaten and had seen a movie and had gotten more groceries. I knew I had the time to do those things until today. Now I was watching TV

and eating a corned beef on sourdough sandwich and washing it down with Coke and listening to the radios. Then, I heard something on the radio to the bug I had put inside the boarded up house. I looked at my watch and turned on the digital recorder and recorded when I had heard the something on the radio to the bug I had put inside the boarded up house, and then I listened in on the radio.

It sounded like some people were coming into the boarded up house. Then, I heard some humming. Maybe that humming was coming from the generators that they had turned on. I recognized that kind of sound before. Then, I heard these people open up those cabinets and take the things out of the cabinets and put them on the table.

"O.K.," Norton said. "Where were we?"

"We were working on the electric dead bolt lock opener."

"Oh. Yeah."

I didn't hear Norton and the other people continue talking. Which meant that they were probably looking at those blueprints.

"You know it's been a week and a half now since the police have stopped following me?" Norton said.

"Yeah," Benton said. "I'm glad. For a while I was sweating it out."

"So was I. That was the longest few days I ever had. For a while I thought they were going to arrest *me* for Merv's murder. And they would have if Glenn hadn't walked into Merv's office and saw me holding that knife in my hand and saw Merv's body and blood on his desk."

"Yeah. But you took advantage of the situation to make it look like you didn't kill Merv: you knocked Glenn unconscious out and closed the door to Merv's office, and then you took Merv's cash box out of Merv's desk and put it in Glenn's hand, and then you left Merv's office and went and told the other people who work at Tools and

Machines, Inc. you saw Glenn steal Merv's cash box and you knocked him unconscious and you wanted them to watch Glenn until the police got there. And then the police came and took Glenn away."

"Yeah. And then I found out how much the bail on theft was and had Glenn released from jail before his trial started. It was a good thing I framed him for stealing Merv's cash box instead of framed him for Merv's murder. The bail on theft wasn't as much as the bail on murder. The bail on murder would have been too much to pay. And because of that, I wouldn't have been able to bail him out of jail."

"Or worse--there wouldn't have been any bail on murder at all. Making it impossible for you to bail Glenn out of jail."

"Yeah," another person said. "And the reason why you had that bail bondsman bail Glenn out of jail was because you needed to kill Glenn so his trial wouldn't come to court. If you hadn't killed him, then his trial

would come to court, and then the truth would come out into the open."

"That's right," Norton said. "And the reason why I killed the bail bondsman and stole his briefcase after I killed Glenn was to keep him from telling anyone it was me who wanted Glenn bailed out of jail."

"Yeah," Benton said. "And the reason why you stole the bail bondsman's briefcase as well as you killed the bail bondsman was because you needed to destroy the papers inside the briefcase that said who put up the money to bail Glenn out of jail."

"That's right," Norton confirmed.

"And then you destroyed the papers and the briefcase as well as you killed the bail bondsman."

"That's right. Now all the loose ends have been taken care of. There's nothing to link us to Merv's murder. No one knows that I killed Merv and why."

"And no one ever will, too," the other person said. "And now we can go on as before."

"That's right. It's over. The case is closed. The police aren't looking into Merv's death, anymore."

"That's right," the other person said. "But there is Hurley, you know. I hate to bring *that* up."

"That's all right, Sid. I understand. But we go ahead as planned about him: if he reappears, then we follow him and watch him. Until or unless he reappears, we forget him and go on as before."

"All right."

Then I heard Norton and Benton and Sid and the other people stop talking about Merv's death and talk about their electric dead bolt opener project and other things. They didn't even talk about why Norton had killed Kent. But I think I figured out why Norton had killed Kent: Kent had found out that Norton had been smuggling out of

Tools and Machines, Inc. and into the boarded up house the material that Tools and Machines, Inc. uses to make their tools and machines and had also discovered Norton's and Benton's and Sid's and the other people's project. Norton found out that Kent had found out that Norton had smuggled out of Tools and Machines, Inc. and into the boarded up house that material that Tools and Machines, Inc. uses to make their tools and machines and also found out about Norton's and Benton's and Sid's and the other people's project and killed him to keep him looking any further into what Norton and Benton and Sid and the other people were doing and to keep him from telling anyone else what he had found out.

All through the night I heard Norton and Benton and Sid and the other people continue talking about their electric dead bolt lock opener project and other things. They also talked about their other projects.

It was four minutes to eleven when I heard them say they were going to call it a night. Then I heard them say they were going to continue working on their projects tomorrow. Then I heard all of them agree on when tomorrow they were going to go back to the boarded up house and continue working on their projects. Then I heard the humming stop, which meant that they must have turned the generators off, and then I heard things being taken off the table and put back into the cabinets. Then I heard all of them leave the boarded up house, and then I heard one of them close and lock the back door of the house, and then I heard cars being started up, and then I heard them drive away. I looked at my watch and recorded when I heard the conversations and activities inside the boarded up house end. Then I turned the digital recorder off and put on my disguise and left the motel and went over to a twenty four hour restaurant to get something to eat. I was

getting hungry, but this time I was in the mood to eat out this time. I knew I could eat out this time. Since Norton and Benton and Sid and the other people had decided to call it a night on working on their projects. That gave me the chance to eat out.

I was here at the twenty four hour restaurant now. Sitting at the counter and sipping coffee while I was waiting for my meal I had ordered to come. I also thought about what I had heard Norton and Benton and Sid and the other people talk about when they had been at the boarded up house and when they had been working on their projects and what they had been talking about after they had talked about Kent's death: the projects they were working on, and other things. They had acted like the investigation of Kent's death was completely over. And because of this, they had nothing to worry about. They could go on as before.

Or in other words, Norton had gotten away with the crimes he had committed.

My meal came, and then I dug right into it: a cheeseburger and fries, and I washed it down with a chocolate shake.

I felt better after I had eaten. Then I left a nice tip on the counter, and then I paid the check and left the restaurant and got back into my car and drove back to the motel.

I was here at the motel now. I got out of my disguise and got undressed and took a shower, and then I went back into the room and set the alarm clock for a time I wanted to get up at tomorrow, and then I put my gun underneath the pillow, and then I turned off the light and got into bed and went to sleep.

The next day, I was up early and sipping coffee and eating sandwiches and watching TV and listening to the boarded up house and recording what I was hearing inside the boarded up house. Norton and Benton and Sid and the other people were at the boarded up house right now. And it sounded like they were working on their projects and

talking about them and about other things. They didn't talk about Kent's murder. Which meant that it was the same as it had been before after they had talked about Kent's murder: all of them acted like the investigation of Kent's death was over. There was no more investigation of Kent's murder. The case of Kent's murder was closed.

And all through the day and night they talked about their projects and other things while they continued working on their projects. Not once did they talk about Kent's murder.

And it was eleven o'clock at night when I heard them call it a night and I heard them say what time tomorrow they were going to continue working on their projects and heard them put everything away and heard them turn off the generators and close up and lock up the boarded up house and leave the house. Then I turned the digital recorder off and put my disguise on and left the motel and went over to the same twenty four hour

restaurant I had eaten at before to get something to eat. I was getting hungry, but I was in the mood to eat out again.

I was here at the twenty four hour restaurant now. Sitting at the counter and eating the same thing I had eaten the last time I had been here. This time I didn't think about what I had heard Norton and Benton and Sid and the other people had talked about today. Because there was nothing to think about. What they had talked about today was the same things they had talked about before.

I finished eating my cheeseburger and finished drinking my chocolate shake. Then I left a nice tip on the counter and paid the check and left the restaurant and got back into my car and drove back to the motel.

I was here at the motel now. I got out of my disguise and got undressed and took a shower, and then I set the alarm clock for a time I wanted to get up tomorrow, and then I put my gun underneath the pillow, and

then I turned off the light and got into bed and went to sleep.

The next day, I was up early and watching TV and sipping coffee and eating sandwiches and listening in on the boarded up house and recording what I heard at the boarded up house. Norton and Benton and Sid and the other people were at the boarded up house. And continued working on their projects. And continued talking about their projects and other things and not about Kent's murder. The conversations they were having were the same as the ones they had had before.

All through the day and night at the boarded up house, it was still the same. They continued working on and talking about their projects and talked about other things, too, and not about Kent's murder.

It was about eleven o'clock at night when I heard them say they were going to call it a night and say when next Friday they were going to continue working on their projects

and turn off the generators and put everything they were working on back into the cabinets and lock up the cabinets and leave the place and one of them close and lock the door and then all of them get into their cars and start them up and leave. Then I turned my digital recorder off and put my disguise on and left the motel and went over to the same twenty four hour restaurant I had eaten at before and ate the same things I had eaten before, but didn't think about what I had heard at the boarded up house tonight. Because there was nothing to think about this time. What they had been doing and talking about while they had been at the boarded up house was the same as it had been before.

I felt better after I had eaten. Then I left a nice tip on the counter and paid my check and left the restaurant and got back into my car and started it up and drove back to the motel.

I was here at the motel now. I got out of my disguise and got undressed and took a shower, and then I set the alarm clock for a time I wanted to get up at tomorrow, and then I put my gun underneath the pillow, and then I turned off the light and got into bed and went to sleep. Tonight I was going to need to get a good night's sleep. Tomorrow, I was going to have to call Vicki and request a meeting with her so I can tell her what I had heard at the boarded up house.

CHAPTER XI

It was five thirty-six pm, Monday evening, and Vicki and I were here at Vicki's place. This morning I had called Vicki and told her I'd like to request a meeting with her so I can tell her what I heard out at the boarded up house, and then she suggested that I meet her at her place at five thirty today for our meeting. She wouldn't be working at that time. She got off at five. Then I told her I'll be there at five thirty today, and then she and I hung up, and I stayed inside my motel room and continued listening in on the radios and took a nap and took a shower and got dressed and got into my disguise and went somewhere and got something to eat, and then I had come over here to Vicki's place to have our meeting. Now Vicki and I were sitting in the living

room and I told Vicki everything I had heard out at the boarded up house and played the recordings of everything I had heard out at the boarded up house.

Vicki looked horrified after she had finished listening to the recordings. "My god," she gasped. "So Hank did kill Merv and Glenn and that bail bondsman and stole the bail bondsman's briefcase to keep the truth from coming out about what is was that Hank doesn't want anyone to know about."

"That's right," I confirmed. "And I've got a pretty good idea why Hank killed Merv." Then I told Vicki what my theory for Norton's killing Kent was.

Vicki looked at me, puzzled, after I had finished. "Really," she said.

"Yeah. What we should do now is find out if Hank killed Merv for that reason, and find out if Hank has been smuggling that material out of Tools and Machines, Inc. into the boarded up house, and find out what those projects are that Norton and Benton

and those other people are working on. I can tell a police friend of mine what I found out. He told me about your telling the police about what you suspected of the door of Merv's office being locked at the time you came out of the bathroom and heard the door to his office being locked and before you went back to work. His name is Craig Pritchard. He's a lieutenant for the detective unit of the police department. He's looking into the case of Merv's death. He and I can work out a plan to find out if Hank did kill Merv to keep Merv from looking into Hank's and Benton's and those other people's projects and to keep Merv from telling anyone what he found out, and find out if Hank has been smuggling that material out of Tools and Machines, Inc. into the boarded up house. If we do all of these things, we'll have Hank for smuggling and murder and theft and burglary, and have Benton and those other people for whatever crimes *they're* committing."

"Yeah," Vicki agreed. "All right. Do it."

"All right. I'll tell you what Lieutenant Pritchard and I are going to do before we carry out the plan."

"All right."

"In the meantime, everything that we've been talking about ends right here."

"I understand. I won't tell anyone what we've been talking about until I hear from you."

"Good."

"Anything else, Mr. Hurley?"

"No. That's it. What about you?"

"No. I think that's it."

"All right," Then I put my disguise back on and left Vicki's place and got back into my car and started it up, and then I drove away from Vicki's place. Then I took my cell phone out of my pocket and called Craig and told him I needed to talk to him about Merv's death. I wanted to tell him what I had found out and talk to him about working out and executing a plan to arrest Norton and

Benton and the other people who were in on Norton's and Benton's projects. Then Craig and I decided on where and when to meet for the planning, and then he and I hung up.

Craig and I were here inside my motel room now. I had told Craig where I was staying and why I was staying here. Now Craig and I were sitting at a table and I told Craig that I had told Vicki everything I had seen and heard at the boarded up house and that I had played the recordings of everything I had heard out at the boarded up house to her, and then I told Craig everything I had seen and heard at the boarded up house, and then I played the recordings of everything I had heard at the boarded up house to him.

Craig looked horrified after he had heard the recordings and after I turned the digital recorder off. And he got the same thoughts about what Norton had done that Vicki had gotten.

"That's right," I confirmed. "And I've got a pretty good idea why Norton killed Kent." Then I told Craig what that theory was.

Craig looked at me, puzzled, after I had finished. "Really," he said.

"Yeah. What we should do is find out if Norton did kill Kent for that reason, and find out if Norton did smuggle that material out of Tools and Machines, Inc. into the boarded up house, and find out what those projects are that Norton and Benton and those other people are working on. If we can do all of these things, we'll have Norton for smuggling and murder and theft of burglary, and have Benton and those other people for whatever crimes *they're* committing."

Craig thought about all of this. Then he spoke: "Yeah. All right. Let's do it."

"Great. After we work this plan to find out if Norton killed Kent for that reason and find out if he has been smuggling that material out of Tools and Machines, Inc. into the boarded up house, and find out what

those projects are that Norton and Benton and those other people are working on, and before we carry out, the plan, I'll need to tell Vicki Weylon what we're going to do. Since she is my client."

"I know. I understand."

"Good," Then I told Craig how I wanted to carry out the plan.

"That might work," Craig said after I had finished.

"Yeah, it might," I said.

"I'll meet you back here at your motel room at ten o'clock tomorrow morning, and then we'll work out the plan of action."

"Great."

"Tonight you get a good night's sleep."

"I will. You, too."

"I will," Then Craig stood up and said good night to me, and I said good night to him. Then he left. And I looked at my watch. Six fifty-four.

I had time to go get something to eat. I was getting hungry. So I pulled a tuna fish

sandwich and a bottle of Coke out of the refrigerator and started eating the sandwich and sipping the Coke. I was in the mood to eat in this time. Then I turned the TV on and took the sandwich and the Coke over to the table that Craig and I had been sitting at when we had had our discussion about what I had seen out at the boarded up house, and that we were going to meet back here at my motel room at ten o'clock tomorrow morning to work out our plan of action, and then I sat down at the table and continued eating the sandwich and sipping the Coke and watched TV and continued listening to all of the radios. They were on the table, too. And they had been on the table when Craig and I had had our discussion about what I had heard out at the boarded up house, and that we were going to meet here at my motel room tomorrow so we could work out our plan of action.

I felt better after I had eaten. Now I looked at my watch. Seven thirteen.

I had time to check the grocery situation and go get some more groceries if I had to. So I left the table and went over to the refrigerator and looked inside the refrigerator. Then I realized it wouldn't hurt to get more food. So I closed the door to the refrigerator, and then I put my disguise on and collected all of the radios and turned the TV off and stepped out of my motel room and locked it, and then I unlocked my car and got into it, and then I started it up and drove away from the motel and over to the store and bought more food.

I was back here at my motel room now. I removed my disguise and turned the TV on and put all the radios on the bed, and then I put the food into the refrigerator, and then I got on the bed and listened to all of the radios and watched TV. There wasn't anything else about the assignment I could do until tomorrow.

At eleven o'clock, I turned the TV and radios off and set the alarm clock for a time I

wanted to get up at tomorrow, and then I put my gun underneath the pillow, and then I got undressed and turned off the light and got into bed and went to sleep.

The next day, Craig and I were here inside my motel room. He and I sat at the table and sipped coffee and worked out our plan of action.

After we worked out our plan of action, Craig left, and I looked at my watch. Twelve O-three. Then I called Vicki and told her what the plan of action was. Then we hung up. After that I turned the TV on and took the radios off of the table and took them over to the bed and put them on the bed, and then I got on the bed and listened to the radios while I watched TV. It wasn't time for me to leave the motel now. I was going to have to wait until the time comes for me to leave the motel, then leave the motel. I couldn't afford to be seen leaving the motel right after Craig leaves the motel. Or vice versa. It might arouse suspicion if one of us

would be seen leaving the motel right after the other person leaves the motel.

When the time came for me to leave the motel, I turned the TV off and I put my disguise back on and packed and collected all of the radios and put them in my pocket, and then I collected my suitcase and briefcase, and then I collected all of the food I had put inside the refrigerator, and then I left the room and put my luggage and briefcase and the food into my car and locked the car, and then I went over to the office and told the clerk I was checking out. Then I paid my bill and went back to my car and unlocked it, and then I got into the car and started it up, and then I left the motel.

When I got here to the car rental agency, I returned my rented car and paid for it, and then I got on the bus that took me back to where *my* car was, and when I got here, I checked my car. It *was* still here. I liked that. Then I went into the store and went into the bathroom, and then I noticed *I* was the only

one inside the bathroom. Then I went into the cubicle the toilet was in and closed and locked the door, and then I removed my disguise of the blond with the stern face and put the disguise into my pocket, and then I combed my hair, and then I collected my luggage and my briefcase, and then I unlocked the door to the cubicle and left the cubicle, and then I walked out of the bathroom and walked out of the store and into the parking lot and walked over to my car and unlocked it, and then I put my luggage and my briefcase inside the back seat of my car, and then I closed the door of the back seat of my car and got into the front seat of my car and closed the door, and then I started up my car and pulled out of the parking lot and turned onto the street and drove back to my office. But this time I didn't take indirect routes back to my office. Since I wanted to let Norton and Benton and their people know that I was "back in town."

When I got here to my office, I parked my car in front of my office and got out of the car and collected my briefcase and locked up the door of the back seat of my car, and then I locked up the door of the front seat of my car, and then I unlocked the front door of my office and went into the office and closed the door. Then I went over to my desk and put my briefcase back underneath the knee hole of my desk, and then I unlocked and opened one of the drawers of my desk, and then I took a book out of the drawer and put it on the desk, and then I opened the book and turned the pages until I came to the hollowed out pages of the book. Then I saw the digital recorder inside the book. The digital recorder was voice activated. I took the recorder out of the book to see if it had been activated while Norton and Benton and their people had tried to find me. It hadn't been activated. There were no recordings of anything on the recorder. Which meant that Norton and Benton and

their people must not have been here at my office when they had tried to find me. Then I put the recorder back into the hollowed out pages of the book, and then I closed the book, and then I put the book back into the drawer of my desk I kept the recorder in, and then I closed and locked the drawer. After that I checked the rest of the rooms of my office. Nothing. That confirmed the fact that it looked like Norton and Benton and their people hadn't been here at my office when they had tried to find me. Then I went back into my office and unlocked one of my filing cabinets and took the file on the Kent incident case out of the filing cabinet, and then I closed the cabinet and put the file on the Kent incident case on my desk, and then I sat down behind my desk and turned the computer on and wrote a summary on everything I had discovered so far in the Kent incident case, and my conversations with Vicki and Craig about the case, and then I turned on the printer and printed out

the summary, and then I put the summary into the file on the Kent incident case, and then I turned the computer and the printer off. I wasn't going to need to use the computer and the printer any more right now. Then I looked at my watch. Twelve forty-six. Then I got up and put the file on the Kent incident case back into the filing cabinet, and then I locked up the cabinet, and then I stepped out of the office and locked it, and then I went over to my car and unlocked it, and then I got into my car and started it up, and then I left my office and went back to my place without taking indirect routes back to my place so I could let Norton and Benton and their people know that I was "back in town."

When I got here, I went over to one of the cabinets here inside my living room and took a book out of it and put the book on top of the cabinet. Then I opened the book and turned the pages until I came to some hollowed out pages in the book. And inside

the book was a voice activated digital recorder. I took the recorder out of the book to see if it had been activated while Norton and Benton and their people had tried to find me. It hadn't been activated. There were no recordings of anything on the recorder. Which meant that Norton and Benton and their people must not have been here at my place when they had tried to find me. I put the recorder back into the hollowed out pages of the book, and then I closed the book, and then I put the book back into the cabinet I kept the book in. Then I checked the rest of the place. It was clean. That confirmed the fact that Norton and Benton and their people must not have been here at my place when they had tried to find me. Then I went into the kitchen and put into the refrigerator all of the food I had bought while I had been out and about, and then I went into my room and unpacked. After that I looked at my watch. One twenty-six.

I had time to think about the results of my searching my office and my place. So I left my room and went into the kitchen and withdrew a can of beer from the refrigerator, and then I went back into the living room and turned on the TV, and then I sat down in my recliner chair and watched TV and sipped the beer and thought about the results of my searching my office and my place.

There were no recordings of anything that had gone on at my office and here at my place; there wasn't even any evidence of anything that had gone on at my office and here at my place, either. Like someone braking into my office and my place to do something. Like steal something or plant a bug and a phone tap or look for something. Which meant that Norton and Benton and their people must not have gotten into my office and my place to do something. Instead they must have been trying to find me to follow me and watch me. And then do to me

whatever they think would be necessary if they find out that I find something in the Kent incident case that they don't want me to find. Which meant that Norton and Benton and their people must have realized that I hadn't opened up a file on the Kent incident case and hadn't found any evidence to the theories I had about the Kent incident case. Then I looked at the clock on the cabinet on the other side of the living room. One thirty-four.

I decided to stay in for the rest of the day. No sense going out and driving around and do nothing else to let Norton and Benton and their people know that I was "back in town" right now. Norton and Benton and their people would wonder why I was driving around and doing nothing else if they would see me today. And I couldn't have that. Not only that, I could execute the next phase of the plan of action tomorrow. What I could do today was get some dinner and some sleep. So I left the living room and

went into *my* room and got undressed, and then I went into the bathroom and took a shower, and then I went back into *my* room and got into my pajamas and bathrobe and slippers, and then I went back into the living room and sat back down in the recliner chair and continued watching TV and sipping my beer.

After a while, I got hungry, so I went into the kitchen and cooked some chili and made a hamburger, and then I took them back into the living room and ate them while I continued sipping my beer and continued watching TV.

At eleven o'clock, I turned the TV off and went into *my* room, and then I turned the light on and set the alarm clock for a time I wanted to get up at tomorrow, and then I put my gun underneath the pillow, and then I turned the light off and got out of my bathrobe and sippers and got into bed and went to sleep. It was time now for me to get

the sleep for the work I was going to do tomorrow.

CHAPTER XII

The next day, I was following Norton. I had managed to get over to Tools and Machines, Inc. in time to follow Norton and execute the next phase of the plan of action, and then I had seen Norton leave Tools and Machines, Inc. to go have lunch. Now I saw Norton go over to Shari's to have lunch. Shari's was a good place to eat at. I had eaten there before. It was another good place I liked to eat at.

I saw Norton make the turn and drive into the parking lot of Shari's and park his car there in the parking lot, and then I saw him get out of his car and lock his car. He was wearing a gray tweed coat and a white shirt, no tie, open collar, yellow pants, and black leather shoes. Then I saw Norton go into Shari's. And I made the turn and drove

into the parking lot of Shari's and parked *my* parked next to Norton's. Then I got out of *my* car and locked it, and then *I* went into Shari's.

I stopped and looked all around me after I had walked into Shari's. Then I saw Norton. He was sitting at the counter. No one else was sitting at the counter. Then *I* went over to the counter and sat next to him.

"Hello, Mr. Norton," I said to him.

Norton did a double take when he saw me. Then he spoke to me: "Mr. Hurley," Then he extended his hand to shake hands with me. I shook hands with him. "How are you?" he then asked me.

"I'm fine," I answered. "You?"

"Fine. How's it going on your investigation?"

"Well, I hadn't the chance to continue it. Something came up. Urgent family business. It was out of town. I took care of it."

"And now you're back in town now, huh?"

"That's right."

"And you're going to continue your investigation?"

"That's right. I will. Now that I'm back in town and now that I have the time to continue it."

"I see."

"How's it going with you?"

"Oh, fine. Business is still the same. It's still good. I've been promoted to manager of Tools and Machines, Inc."

"Well, congratulations. Considering," Then I held my hand out to shake hands with Norton. He and I shook hands.

"Thank you," he said, smiling.

"You're welcome."

Then Norton and I looked at some menus and ordered our lunches. Then we talked about other things and not about my investigation right now. There was no reason for me to continue the conversation about my investigation right now.

Norton and I were eating our lunches now. Norton was having a hot roast beef sandwich and washing it down with coffee, and *I* was having fish and chips and washing *that* down with coffee. For dessert Norton had apple pie and washed *that* down with more coffee, and *I* had chocolate ice cream for dessert and washed *that* down with more coffee.

We felt better after we had eaten. Now we were having more coffee and continued talking about other things and not about my investigation.

About an hour later, Norton left a nice tip on the counter, and then he and I said good bye to each other, and then Norton paid his check and left the restaurant, and I stayed here inside the restaurant. There was no reason for me to continue following Norton right now. I continued sitting at the counter and had more coffee and took out of my pocket the radio to the tap I had put inside Norton's cell phone, and the

earphone, and then I plugged the earphone into the radio, and then I put the earpiece of the earphone in my ear, and then I turned the radio on and put it back into my pocket and listened in on Norton's cell phone. Then, I heard a phone ringing. Then, I heard Benton answer the phone.

"Hello. Dirk?" Norton said. "It's Hank."

"Hank. How are ya?"

"Fine. You?"

"Fine."

"Frank Hurley is back in town. I just talked to him. I saw him at Shari's when I was having lunch there." Then Norton told Benton about the conversation that he and I had had about my being "out of town," and that I was "back in town now."

"I see," Benton said after Norton had finished. "Well, what do you want us to do?"

"Pick up his trail and follow him and watch him. He must still be at Shari's right now. He was still there when I left Shari's."

"I can pick up his trail and follow him and watch him right now."

"Good."

"Anything else, Hank?"

"No, that's it. Bye."

"Bye."

Then Norton and Benton hung up. After that, I took the radio out of my pocket and turned it off and unplugged the earpiece and put both the radio and the earphone back into my pocket. Then I continued sipping my coffee. I had just executed the new phase in the plan of action. I looked around from time to time to see when Benton was going to show up and follow me and watch me.

A few minutes later, I saw him walk into Shari's and look around. He was wearing a black T-shirt and black jeans and black boots. I left a nice tip on the counter and asked for my check and got it and paid it, and then I left the restaurant and went out to my car and unlocked it, and then I got into it and started it up, and then I pulled

out of the parking lot of Shari's and turned onto the street and drove down the street and looked into the rear- and side view mirrors of my car. Then, I saw Benton following me.

To make it look good, I went back to my office.

When I got here, I made the turn and drove into the parking lot and parked my car in front of the office, and then I got out of my car and locked it, and then I unlocked the door of my office and went into the office and locked the door. Then, I peeked out of the window. Then, I saw Benton parked across the street from me and watching the office. Then I went over to my desk and took my remote control out of my desk, and then I turned on the TV with the remote control and sat down behind my desk, and then I took the radio to the bug I had put inside Benton's cell phone and my digital recorder out of my pocket and put them on the desk and turned on the radio to

the bug I had put inside Benton's cell phone and listened to it and watched TV and kept track of time. But so far I didn't hear Benton talking to anyone.

Four hours later, I decided to call it a day. So I turned off the radio to the bug I had put inside Benton's cell phone and put the radio and my digital recorder into my pocket, and then I turned off the TV with the remote control and put the remote control back into the desk, and then I stepped out of my office and closed and locked the door, and then I got into my car and started it up, and then I left my office and took the radio to the bug I had put inside Benton's cell phone and my digital recorder out of my pocket and put them on the front seat of my car, and then I turned on the radio to the bug I had put inside Benton's cell phone and put it back on the front seat of my car and listened to it. But so far I didn't hear Benton talking to anyone.

I was here at MacDonald's now. Sitting at a table and having a Coke while I was waiting for the meal I had ordered to go to be prepared. Through the corner of my eye, I saw Benton parked across the street from me and watching me. I also had on the table the radio to the bug I had put inside Benton's cell phone and my digital recorder. Although Benton didn't see them. He couldn't see them from where *he* was. I listened to the radio to the bug I had put inside Benton's cell phone. But so far I didn't hear Benton talking to anyone.

I was here at my place now. I had seen Benton follow me to my place, and after I had gotten here, I had peeked out the window in the living room to see what Benton had been doing. He had parked across the street from me and had watched me. Now I left the window. Benton was still parked across the street from me and still watching me. I sat down in my recliner chair and turned on the TV with the remote

control, and then I took one of the fish sandwiches out of the bag of food I had ordered from MacDonald's and ate it and watched TV and took out of my pocket the radio to the bug I had put inside Benton's cell phone and my digital recorder and my pen and notebook and put them on the coffee table and turned on the radio and listened to it. But so far I didn't hear Benton talking to anyone. I would have gotten undressed and I would have gotten into my pajamas and bathrobe and slippers to listen in on Benton's cell phone and watch TV and eat, but since Benton was following me, there was no telling what would happen. And I would want to be prepared for it.

An hour later, I heard Benton make a phone call. Quickly I looked at my watch and turned on the digital recorder and recorded the time the call was made and left the recorder on and listened in on Benton's cell phone. Then, I heard another phone ring.

"Hello?" the person said. The voice was male. Although I didn't recognize the voice.

"Hello. Tom?" Benton said.

"Yeah," Tom said.

"It's Dirk "

"Dirk. How are ya?"

"Fine. You?"

"Fine."

"Have you had dinner yet?"

"Yes, I have. Why?"

"I'm getting hungry and tired. Could I get you to relieve me on following and watching Hurley?"

"Yeah. Where are you right now?"

Then Benton told him.

"All right," Tom said after Benton had finished. "All be right over."

"Great," Then Benton hung up.

So did Tom. Then I looked at my watch and recorded when the phone call ended, and then I turned the digital recorder off and looked at the board on the radio to the bug I had put inside Benton's cell phone. It

displayed the phone number that Benton had dialed. Quickly I took my pen and notebook off of the coffee table and wrote down the phone number. Then I collected my pen and notebook and left the living room and went into the den and got out the reverse phone directory to find whose phone number this was. It was Tom Lawton's phone number. Then I got on the computer to find out what I can about Lawton. He had lived in Tacoma, Washington most of his life. Then he moved here to Bellingham. He was a carpenter. Good citizen.

Then I turned the printer on and printed out the information on Lawton, and then I put the information on Lawton in my desk. I was going to have keep it there until I can go to the office and put it in the file on the Kent incident case. Then I turned off the computer and the printer and left the den and went back into the living room and walked over to the window to peek out it. Lawton was there. Parked across the street

from me. I saw his blond hair and nose that pointed down. He was driving a blue Pontiac. I also saw the license plate number of his car. I wrote it down in my notebook. Then I went back to my recliner chair and sat down in it and continued watching TV and listening to the radio to the bug I had put inside Benton's cell phone and continued eating the fish sandwich I had started eating.

Before I hit the sack, I peeked out the window again. Lawton was still there. Still parked across the street from me and still watching me. Then I turned the TV off and collected the radio to the bug I had put inside Benton's cell phone and my digital recorder and my pen and notebook and went into *my* room and turned on the light, and then I put the radio to the bug I had put inside Benton's cell phone and my digital recorder and my pen and notebook on one of the end tables that were on either side of my bed, and then I set the alarm clock for a

time I wanted to get up at tomorrow, and then I put my gun underneath the pillow, and then I turned off the light and got out of my bathrobe and slippers and got into bed and went to sleep. Tonight I was going to need to get a good night's sleep. Tomorrow I was going to execute the next phase in the plan of action.

The next day, I was up early and went over to the office and put the information on Lawton inside the file on the Kent incident case. Then I left the office and did the same things today that I had done yesterday. Which was the next phase in the plan of action. And again, I saw Benton and Lawton taking turns following me and watching me.

The day after that, I was here at home and in the living room and sipping my last cup of coffee and watching TV. I had gotten up early this morning and had made and had eaten a delicious bacon and scrambled egg breakfast and washed it down with coffee. Now I finished that last cup of coffee and left

the living room and went into *my* room. It was time now for me to get dressed and leave and execute the next phase in the plan of action.

CHAPTER XIII

I was here at the office now. Calling Norton at Tools and Machines, Inc.

"Good morning," a female voice said. "Tools and Machines, Inc."

"Good morning," I said. "I'd like to make an appointment to talk to Hank Norton about something. My name is Frank Hurley."

"What's it about, Mr. Hurley?"

"Well, I'm afraid I should discuss it with Mr. Norton before I discuss it with anyone else. I've already met Mr. Norton. Just tell him that this time I need to talk to him about something in an official capacity."

"One moment, please," Then there was a pause. Then the woman spoke to me again: "Mr. Hurley?"

"Yes?" I said.

"Thank you for holding."

"You're welcome."

"You can see Mr. Norton tomorrow morning at ten o'clock."

"Good."

"Do you know how to get to Tools and Machines, Inc.?"

"No, I don't."

Then the woman told me how to get to Tools and Machines, Inc., and I wrote the directions down on the pad on my desk, and then the woman told me where on the plant Norton's office was. Then I thanked her, and then we hung up. Then I wrote down in my desk calendar where and when my appointment with Norton was. To make it look real. I had just executed the next phase in the plan of action. Then I looked at my watch. Ten o-three.

Between now and the time I keep my appointment with Norton, I could do today the same things that I had done yesterday. Which was the next phase in the plan of action. And I did those things. And again, I

saw Benton and Lawton were taking turns following me and watching me.

The next day, I was driving over to Tools and Machines, Inc. to keep my appointment with Norton. Again I looked into the rear- and side view mirrors to see if Benton and Lawton were still following me. This time I saw Benton following me. He was driving far behind me, though, so I wouldn't see him. Although I saw the color of his car.

I also saw him drive by Tools and Machines, Inc. when I made the turn and drove into the driveway and drove up to the gatehouse of Tools and Machines, Inc.

When I reached the gatehouse, I stopped my car at the gatehouse, and then a sharp looking thin man in a blue gray uniform came out of the gatehouse and walked over to me and spoke to me: "Good morning."

"Good morning," I said to him. "My name is Frank Hurley. I have an appointment with Hank Norton."

"Yes, I know. Just a routine check, Mr. Hurley . . . "

"I understand."

Then the guard went back into the gatehouse and picked the receiver of a phone and spoke into it, and then he replaced the receiver and walked out of the gatehouse and came back to me and pointed to a building inside the plant and spoke to me: "You see that building inside the center of the plant?"

"Yes."

"That's that main building. Hank Norton's office is in the main building. Just drive over there and park your car there. Hank Norton's office is on the top floor of the main building."

"Thanks."

"You're welcome," Then the guard ran over to the high gate bearing the sign lettered TOOLS AND MACHINES, INC. and touched the switch which cycled the barred gate open. Then I drove on in, and then the

guard touched the same switch again which cycled the gate closed.

When I came here to the main building, I parked my car here next to the building and got out of the car, and then I locked my car and went into the main building and glanced at a directory on the wall and saw whereabouts on the top floor of the main building Norton's office was. Then I stepped into the elevator and went up to the top floor.

Norton's office was big and wide and spacious and light brown with a chocolate brown carpet. On some of the walls of Norton's office were paintings and pictures and plaques of interest and a copy of Norton's license to do business. Lining most of the walls inside Norton's office was the kind of office equipment that Norton used in his work as manager of Tools and Machines, Inc. Against one wall was a black leather couch, and opposite that wall, and close to the window which was covered by thick

white drapes, was Norton's big maple desk. And in front of his desk were three maple leather armchairs.

Norton himself was sitting behind his desk in *his* maple leather armchair. He was looking at some papers.

His phone rang. He picked up the receiver and said, "Yes?"

"Frank Hurley is here," said a young-old female voice.

"Send him in."

"Yes, sir," Then the woman hung up.

I walked into Norton's office and closed the door and walked over to Norton.

Norton stood up to greet me. He was wearing a dark charcoal gray suit and a white shirt, no tie, open collar.

When I reached him, he and I shook hands. Then he offered me something to drink, but I told him I didn't want anything. Then he asked me to sit down. I did. So did he.

"My secretary told me that this time you need to talk to me about something in an official capacity." Norton said to me.

"That's right. I do," I said. "I don't know if you know this or not, but some material of yours has been smuggled out of your plant."

Norton looked shocked. "What?!" he exclaimed.

"That's right. Some material that you use to make your tools and machines with has been smuggled out of your plant. One of your employees noticed the material missing and called the police and reported the crime."

"I see. Well, why are *you* here, Mr. Hurley?"

"The employee filled out a report on the crime, but that's all that's happened. He hasn't heard from the police since then. Then he hired me to find the material."

"I see. This employee. Who is he?"

"I'm sorry. I can't tell you who he is. That information is privileged."

"All right. How long did this smuggling occur?"

Then I told him when the smuggling had occurred.

"I see," Norton said after I had finished. "Well, I'm glad you brought this to my attention, Mr. Hurley. If there's anything I can do to help, let me know."

"Thank you."

"I'll tell our security department about this. They'll need to know about it."

"Of course. I would like to go over to the department of Tools and Machines, Inc. this material is kept in and take a look around there." I wanted to do this to make it look real.

"Of course," Then Norton told me whereabouts inside Tools and Machines, Inc. that department was.

"Thank you for the directions," I said to Norton after he had finished. "Now I'll get started on the investigation."

"Of course," Then Norton and I stood up and shook hands, and then Norton spoke to me again: "I hope you find it."

"I hope so, too," I said. "So does my client." Then I looked at one of Norton's paintings on the wall and commented on it. Norton looked at the painting. Then I slipped a tap out of my pocket and put it underneath Norton's office landline phone when Norton looked at the painting. And after Norton and I commented on the painting, I left.

I was out in the hall now. Walking away from Norton's office. Then I took the earpiece to the earphone out of my pocket and put it in my ear, and then I reached into my pocket and turned on the radio to the tap I had put underneath Norton's office phone and listened. Then, I heard some dialing. Then, I heard some ringing.

"Hello?" Benton said.

"Hello," Norton said. "Dirk? It's Hank."

"Hank. How are ya?"

"Fine. You?"

"Fine."

Then Norton told Benton about the conversation that he and I had just had about the material that had been smuggled out of Tools and Machines, Inc.

"What?!" Benton exclaimed after Norton had finished.

"That's right," Norton said. Then he repeated to Benton the conversation that he and I had just had about the material that had been smuggled out of Tools and Machines, Inc.

"Really," Benton said after Norton had finished.

"Yeah. He could find out that I smuggled that material out of Tools and Machines, Inc. and into the boarded up house."

"Well, we can't have that."

"No, we can't. You and the boys continue following him and watching him until I come up with a way to get rid of him. All right?"

"Yeah. We'll do that."

"Good."

"Anything else, Hank?"

"No. That's it. Bye."

"Bye." Then Benton hung up.

So did Norton.

So Norton had smuggled the material out of Tools and Machines, Inc. and into the boarded up house.

As I walked over to the department of Tools and Machines, Inc. the material was kept in, I continued listening in on Norton's office phone. But I didn't hear his calling the security department of Tools and Machines, Inc. Well, that made sense. If he had called the security department and told them about the smuggling and that I had been hired to find the material that had been stolen, the security department would work with me on the investigation. And sooner or later both the security department and I could find out that Norton had smuggled the material out of Tools and Machines, Inc. and

into the boarded up house. But if Norton got rid of me, I wouldn't be able to find out he was the one who had smuggled the material out of Tools and Machines, Inc. and into the boarded up house. He wouldn't have to worry about the security department. They hadn't found out that Norton had smuggled the material out of Tools and Machines, Inc. and into the boarded up house.

When I got here to the department of Tools and Machines, Inc. the material was kept in, I looked around here. Although I didn't tell the people who worked here why I was looking around the place. Instead, I told them that the reason why I was looking around was because I was thinking of working here at Tools and Machines, Inc. They liked that. If I told them the real reason why I was looking around here, they'd be shocked, and tell the rest of the people who worked here at Tools and Machines, Inc. about the smuggling, and tell people who didn't work at Tools and Machines, Inc., and

the security department of Tools and Machines, Inc. would hear about the smuggling and tell Norton about the smuggling. But if they were to find out that I had told Norton about the smuggling, but Norton hadn't told them about the smuggling, they'd wonder about that. Might even look into it. And the other people who found out about the smuggling would wonder about it, too, once they hear that Norton had heard about the smuggling, but he hadn't told the security department about it. But I couldn't have this. If this did happen, the word spread about the smuggling and Norton's not telling the security department about it would force Norton to take some kind of action that could endanger or jeopardize my investigation.

I was walking back to my car now to get into it and leave Tools and Machines, Inc. I had finished "looking around" at the department of Tools and Machines, Inc. the

material was kept in. I wasn't going to go over to the security department to talk to them about the smuggling. There wasn't any need to. Since Norton had told me he was going to call Security and report the smuggling to them and tell them that I had been hired to look find the material that had been stolen. And I had no other reason to talk to Security about the smuggling--even though there wasn't an investigation of the smuggling.

I reached my car and unlocked it, and then I got into it and started it up, and then I pulled away from the main building.

I reached the end of the parking lot and stopped and looked both ways to see if it were safe for me to turn onto the street and drive down it when I saw Benton. He was parked across the street from Tools and Machines, Inc. No doubt he had been watching the plant after he had seen me go into it. And now no doubt he was going to continue following me and watching me.

It was safe for me to turn onto the street and drive down it now. I did. Then I looked into the rear- and side view mirrors of my car to see if Benton were following me. He was. Staying far behind me. All I could see of him was his car. But it was so far behind me it looked like a bug. I took my cell phone out of my pocket and called Craig and told him about the interview I had had with Norton about the smuggling, and about the phone conversation that Norton and Benton had had about the interview.

"So Norton was the one who smuggled that material out of Tools and Machines, Inc. and into the boarded up house," Craig said after I had finished.

"That's right," I confirmed.

"Well, we're learning more about this case."

"Yes, we are. And maybe we'll learn more about it when they walk into the trap."

"Yeah. Talk to you later, Frank,"

"Yeah. Talk to you later, Craig," Then I hung up.

So did Craig.

I continued driving down the street and continued looking into the rear- and side view mirrors of my car to see if Benton were still following me. He was.

CHAPTER XIV

Two days later, I was here at my office. I had done the other things in the plan of action that I had done before between the last phase of the plan of action that I had executed, and before I execute the next and hopefully the final phase of the plan of action. And while I had done these things, Benton and Lawton still took turns following me and watching me. Now I stepped out of my office to lock it and go home. It was five thirty-three pm right now. It was also dark out. The sky was big and black and blue, and with a few stars sprinkling in the sky, and the moon was big and round and glowing like silver, and the temperature was cool. I also saw Lawton. He was parked across the street from me and watching me. *He* was following me and watching me *this* time. I

was taking my keys out of my pocket to lock the door of my office when I saw light appear on the walls of my office. It was bright. I turned around to see where the light was coming from. Then, I saw a car come into the parking lot and stop. Then I saw the car and who was driving it. It was Benton's car. And Benton was driving it. Then, I saw Benton get out of his car. He was wearing his black T-shirt and black jeans and black tennis shoes and black leather gloves. His right hand was clenched. I also saw Lawton get out of *his* car and run across the street to us. He was wearing a blue denim waist length coat and matching jeans and a light blue polo shirt and black gloves and white tennis shoes.

Benton unclenched his right hand to show me what was inside his hand. I looked at what was inside his hand: a gun. It looked like an automatic.

"Go ahead and lock up your office, Mr. Hurley," Benton said to me. "It looked like you were going to do that before we came."

"Then unlock your car."

I turned around to see who said that to me--Lawton. He was standing a few inches away from me. His eyes were blue.

I locked the front door of my office, and then I unlocked my car.

"Now show me which key is the ignition key to your car." Lawton said.

I showed him on my key chain which key was the ignition key to my car. Then Lawton grabbed a hold of that key and took the key and the key chain and spoke to me again: "Get into the back seat of the other car, Mr. Hurley. I'll be driving *your* car."

I got into the back seat of Benton's car. Then, I stopped suddenly and looked.

Norton was sitting in the back seat of the Benton's car. He was wearing an off white overcoat and black leather gloves and held a gun on me. The gun looked like a .357 Castle

Magnum. Then he spoke to Benton while he continued watching me and held his gun on me: "Let's go."

Then Benton turned his car around, and then he and Norton and I drove out of the parking lot and turned onto the street and drove down the street. I looked out the back window of Benton's car. I saw Lawton following us in *my* car.

"Where are we going?" I asked Norton.

"We're taking *you* on a one way trip," Norton said.

"One way?"

"That's right. You won't be coming back."

"Oh? And why am I not coming back?"

"Because we can't let you continue living. That's why. You would find out what we're doing. You did say you were going to look into Merv Kent's death. If you would, you'd uncover what we're doing."

"You mean your smuggling that material out of Tools and Machines, Inc. and into that boarded up house?" Then I told Norton

what I had discovered out at the boarded up house and where the boarded up house was.

"Oh, really?" Norton said after I had finished.

"Yeah."

"Well. You've been busy."

"Yes, I have. But what I'd like to know is why are you making these kinds of tools and machines and weapons out at the boarded up house? Why not make them at Tools and Machines, Inc.?"

"Because we can't make them in a factory. These aren't the kind of tools and machines and weapons you can make legally, and you can't find them on the Internet or in stores. And they're not easy to find. And because of these reasons, we're improvising on getting these kinds of tools and machines and weapons. We're making them."

"I see. And if you're making these kinds of tools and machines and weapons, then

that would mean that you're going to use these things to do something illegal."

Norton and Benton didn't answer that question.

I nodded. "I see," I said. "And Merv Kent must have found out what you and your associates were doing and told you about it, and then you killed him to keep him from looking any further into what you and your associates were doing, and to keep him from telling anyone what he found out."

There was a long silence. Then Norton spoke: "I didn't want to kill him. But he left me with no choice. I didn't know he knew about what we were doing until he called me into his office. Then he told me what he found out and that he was going to call the police."

"And then you killed him at that time to keep him from calling the police."

"Yeah."

"And then Glenn Mannering came into Merv Kent's office to see Kent about

something and saw you standing at Kent's desk with a knife in your hand and Kent's body and his blood on his desk. And then you overpowered Mannering to keep him from telling anyone what he saw inside Kent's office, and then you closed the door to Kent's office to keep people from seeing what you did inside Kent's office." Then I told Norton what he had done inside Kent's office and why he had done it.

"Yeah," Norton admitted after I had finished. "That's what I did."

Then I told Norton the suspicions I had for why he had had Pete bail Mannering out of jail, and why he had killed Pete and why he had stolen Pete's briefcase, and why he had killed Mannering, and how he had killed Mannering, and he confirmed all of these suspicions.

"I see," I said after Norton and I had finished. "And you must not have told your security department about the material being smuggled out of Tools and Machines,

Inc. and my being hired to look find the material that had been stolen, because if you did, your security department could have found out that you smuggled that material out of Tools and Machines, Inc. and into the boarded up house as well as I would, knowing that your security department would be working with me on the investigation of the smuggling."

"That's right. I'm sorry about all of this. I didn't want all of this to happen. And all of this wouldn't have happened if Merv hadn't found out what we're doing. And then there's you, Mr. Hurley. If you hadn't looked into Merv's death, you wouldn't be here right now, on your way to die."

I nodded. "Well, that's what you get for being a private detective. By the way. Speaking of my being on my way to die, how *am* I going to die?"

"We're going to take you and your car into a wooded area and kill you there. Then we'll put your body into your car. Then we're

going to leave your body and your car in the wooded area. It'll be a long time before anyone discovers your body and your car. Weeks perhaps. Maybe even months."

"I see. Well, what about my gun? You haven't taken it away from me."

"We're not going to. Your gun will remain in your shoulder holster after you're dead. It'll save us the job of getting rid of it."

"Of course. The gun would be hard to get rid of."

"Of course. So why get rid of it when we don't have to?"

"Of course."

I noticed we were driving out of town now. I looked all around me and out the back window of Benton's car. I saw the light behind me. Which meant that Lawton must still be following Norton and Benton and me. Then I spoke to Norton: "We're out of town now."

"That's right," Norton confirmed. "Your body and your car being far away from town

will help in removing all suspicion from us about your murder as well as your body and your car being inside a wooded area."

"Of course."

A few minutes later, Norton spoke to Benton: "This looks like a good area. Turn off here."

Then Benton turned off of the road and onto the shoulder, and then he drove deep into the wooded area. Lawton turned off of the road and onto the shoulder, and then *he* drove deep into the wooded area, too.

When all four of us were deep inside the wooded area, Benton stopped his car, and Lawton stopped *my* car. Then Norton spoke to me: "O.K. Get out." Then I got out of the car. So did Norton and Benton. Now Norton and Benton and Lawton and I were standing between Benton's car and *my* car. Norton and Benton continued holding their guns on me.

"Any last words, Mr. Hurley?" Norton asked me.

"None that I can think of," I said.

"But I can think of some!"

Then Norton and Benton and Lawton looked to where they heard that.

"Like this is police!" the voice said. "And you're under arrest!"

Then Norton and Benton and Lawton saw light inside the wooded area, and they could hear cars coming into the wooded area. Then they saw the cars. They were police cars. And they saw Craig and more policemen get out of these cars and hold their guns on them.

"We know all about what you've done, Mr. Norton--including the conversation that you and Mr. Hurley had inside Mr. Benton's car coming over here," Craig said to Norton. Then he told Norton everything that I had told Craig, and everything that Craig and his men had heard Norton and me talk about in Benton's car coming over here. Then Norton looked at me and spoke to me again: "So you've been working with the cops on this."

"That's right, Mr. Norton," I admitted.

"How did the police find out about the conversation we had while we were coming over here?"

"Is that important?"

"No. I guess not."

Then Craig told Norton and Benton to drop their guns. Norton and Benton did. Then Craig and the rest of the policemen told Norton and Benton and Lawton what they were arresting them for and read them their rights and put the handcuffs on them. Then all but one policeman put Norton and Benton and Lawton in the police cars and drove them out of the wooded area and back to town. Then that one policeman got into Benton's car and drove *that* out of the wooded area and back to town, and *I* got into *my* car and drove *that* out of the wooded area and back to town.

CHAPTER XV

A few days later, Vicki and I were here at my office. I had called her and told her I had finished the investigation. Then we had made an appointment for me to tell her about the investigation, and for her to pay me for looking into Kent's death. Now we were sitting on either side of my desk, and I told Vicki about the investigation. "And that's it," I said after I had finished. "Now Hank Norton has been arrested for murdering Merv Kent and Glenn Mannering and Pete Gorman, for stealing Pete Gorman's briefcase, and for smuggling that material out of Tools and Machines, Inc. and into that boarded up house, and for conspiring to make and use those tools and machines and weapons to commit the kind of crimes that he and his cohorts wanted to commit, and

his cohorts have been arrested for this conspiracy and for helping Norton try to kill me. Norton and all of these other people are going to be in prison for a long time. And you might be interested to know that the police have confiscated all of that material that Norton had smuggled out of Tools and Machines, Inc. and into the boarded up house and returned it to Tools and Machines, Inc. And all of those blueprints for the kind of tools and machines and weapons that Norton and his cohorts were going to build were destroyed. No one is going to make those kind of tools and machines and weapons now."

Vicki smiled. "Well, I'm glad to hear about all of this," she said.

"I know the investigation won't bring Glenn Mannering and Merv Kent back, but at least Hank Norton and his cohorts are where they can't cause any more harm."

"Yes, they are. It's hard to believe that Hank had been involved in something like this. I had never suspected it."

"Well, that's the thing about people: you can never ever know them that well."

"No. I guess you can't."

"Take some advice, Ms Weylon: never ever think you know someone that well."

Vicki thought about that. Then she smiled and spoke: "I will."

I smiled, too. "Good," I said.

"Now," Vicki asked me. "How much do I owe you?"

I showed her my bill.

Then she took looked at it and took her checkbook out of her purse and wrote out a check to me. Her checkbook was the same color as her purse. After she had finished writing out the check to me, she gave me the check and put her checkbook back into her purse.

I looked at the check. Then I smiled at Vicki and spoke to her again: "Thank you, Ms Weylon,"

"You're welcome, Mr. Hurley."

Then I gave Vicki one of my business cards and spoke to her again: "If you need something new that's secret or illegal looked into, let me know."

"Thank you, Mr. Hurley."

"You're welcome, Ms Weylon."

Then Vicki took her wallet out of her purse and put my card in it. Her wallet was the same color as her purse. Then she put her wallet back into her purse.

"Is there anything else, Ms Weylon?" I then asked her.

"No. I think that's it. What about *you*, Mr. Hurley?"

"No. I think that's it."

Then Vicki and I stood up and shook hands.

Vicki was wearing a long sleeve pink blouse and a red skirt.

"Goodbye, Mr. Hurley," she said to me.

"Goodbye, Ms Weylon."

Then Vicki left and I saw the flesh tone stockings and shiny red high heel shoes she was wearing. Then I sat back down behind my desk and got out my stamp that had the word PAID on it, and then I stamped the word PAID on the bill, and then I put the bill inside the file on the Kent incident case, and then I stood up and put the file into the filing cabinet, and then I locked up the cabinet. Now the Kent incident case was closed. I was available to do anything now.

Two things I could do now, and wanted to do now, were go over to the bank and deposit Vicki's check. And then go home and think about Pete. I was going to miss *him*.

I did those two things.